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To Michael and Janet,
to Joseph and Kristina
and
our grandchildren
whose generations will yet create our
working democracy

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As for my wife, Gail, this book would have been impossible without her tireless work and wise counsel.

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INTRODUCTION

Americans are familiar with the expression "He talks a good game". It is born of long and bitter experience, of the vast gulf separating words and deeds. No one talks a better game of democracy than our big business press. It not only establishes the rules: it sets up the American political system as the model of democracy, while still refusing to soberly assess the systems of other countries, above all, the socialist ones. Objectivity is still conspicuously absent from anything written about these countries, especially the Soviet Union, the world's first and biggest socialist power. Yet, the political system which has enabled the Soviet people to achieve so much over a brief and tortuous period deserves objective consideration.

The Soviet Union overcame the terrible destruction of World War I, the ravages of counter-revolutionary Civil War, and the intervention of 14 imperialist countries, including the U.S. It only had time to complete two five-year plans which had already laid the basis for industrialization and collectivization when it was invaded by the Nazi war machine, the mightiest and most savage the world had ever seen. At a frightful cost, the young socialist state saved the world from Hitler's promised "1,000 years" of fascism.

Socialism, which made it possible to overcome the backward heritages of Czarism, also enabled the Soviet people to rapidly surmount the unprecedented destruction and losses of World War II. Not long before the 1917 Revolution Russia accounted for four per cent of world industrial output; today it is 20 per cent. In 1950 Soviet industrial output was about 30 per cent of that of the U.S. Today it is more than 80 per cent. Any capitalist country that could claim even a fraction of such achievements

would have long been proclaimed a "miracle". Yet, our press continues to ignore or underplay these accomplishments, hence also the political system which made these achievements possible.

I believe most Americans would like to have this system compared to their own so that they could examine both and determine for themselves which of them is more truly democratic. And I believe they would like to base this comparison not on words but on deeds. I submit in the final analysis that all people judge a political system by one standard: How it works for the mass of the people? This is the standard I will apply in this book. It is a standard I applied in the Soviet Union where I lived for almost 6 years with my family (from March 1969 to December 1974).

As Moscow correspondent for the *Daily World*, I attended sessions of the Supreme Soviet. During my extensive travels through 14 of the 15 Republics, I met with heads of Republican Supreme Soviets and of City and Village Soviets and personally became acquainted with dozens of Deputies on all levels. I observed the election process and participated in meetings where Deputies accounted to their constituents. However, most important of all, my family and I experienced the daily life of the Soviet people. For six years we lived at 26 Leningradsky Prospekt, Apt. 12, in the Frunze district of Moscow. We were the "American family" in an apartment building housing many Soviet families. For six years we shared the joys of life without landlords, we reveled in health care without doctors' bills, shopped in our neighborhood stores and at times sweated in the "ochereds" (lines). We walked the streets of Moscow and many other Soviet cities day or night without fear. We shared the many still existing scarcities and together with our Moscow neighbors grumbled at the inefficiencies and irritations of petty bureaucracy. In a word, we experienced Soviet life—its strengths and its weaknesses—to the full. People in the Soviet Union may lack many comforts we still enjoy but I believe the Soviet way of life is more human.

In a number of books, among them *Cities Without Crisis*, *Why Johnny Can't Read* and *Ivan Can, People's Theater: from the Box Office to the Stage* and more

recently, *Moscow Diary*, I have given a comparative account of Soviet life as seen through the eyes of an American and indirectly mentioned the Soviet and American forms of democracy. In this book I'd like to dwell directly on the two opposing political systems, making use of my fair knowledge of both. As a political writer, I attended numerous sessions and hearings of the U.S. Congress, the New York State Legislature and City Hall. I observed our electoral process in action from the inside, from primaries and party conventions to our year-long election campaigns. I was an accredited correspondent at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago in that fateful year, 1968, and was a near-victim of the exuberance of Mayor Daley's police in "protecting" the democratic process.

I make no pretense at false "impartiality". Every journalist, whether he admits it or not, brings to his reporting a point of view. I prefer to level with the reader. I am convinced of the superiority of socialism as a social and political system of which the Communist Party has always been and remains the nucleus. Ever since this system was established, it has worked in the best interests of the mass of the people. I hope to demonstrate this by comparing *working* versus *talking* democracy.

As I write, Washington and our press are hell-bent on turning the clock back to the worst days of the Cold War. All pretense of objective reporting on life in the USSR has been thrown to the winds. In its place the American people are being fed unadulterated anti-Soviet hysteria. Thus, as never before, the American people have to fight for the right to know the truth about the Soviet Union. Anti-Soviet hysteria is war hysteria. The fight for the truth is, therefore, a fight for peace.

CHAPTER I

THREE CRITERIA OF DEMOCRACY

When I ponder over a country's political system, I often recall Abraham Lincoln's words about *government of the people, by the people, for the people*, which I consider to be a definition of three major criteria of democracy and to which the Soviets—a new form of democracy born in revolutionary Russia—conform most fully.

Contrary to popular misconception, the Soviets were not the invention or the creation of the Communist or any other political party. They were the spontaneous creation of the working people of Russia during the first Russian Revolution of 1905. The 1905 Revolution (the dress rehearsal for the Great October Revolution of 1917, as Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Communist Party and the Soviet State, characterized it) was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Its aim was the overthrow of Czarist autocracy and the establishment of a bourgeois democratic republic. The Russian working class headed the toilers of the multi-national Russian Empire and acted as the main motive force of the Revolution.

The Revolution itself gave birth to the Soviets. It began with strikes in individual factories and plants which rapidly spread over the vast Russian Empire and developed into a general strike and then an armed uprising. The need to coordinate the struggle gave rise to *Soviets of Workers' Deputies*. ("Soviet" means Council in Russian.)

From the very start the Soviets were profoundly democratic in their character and functioning. Election of Deputies was by direct and equal (and very often secret) ballot. Most Deputies to the Soviets were from huge industrial plants. Accountability to those represented and recall of Deputies who failed to adequately perform their duties were strict provisions from the very beginning.

At a Moscow
barricade during the
armed uprising of
December 1905.

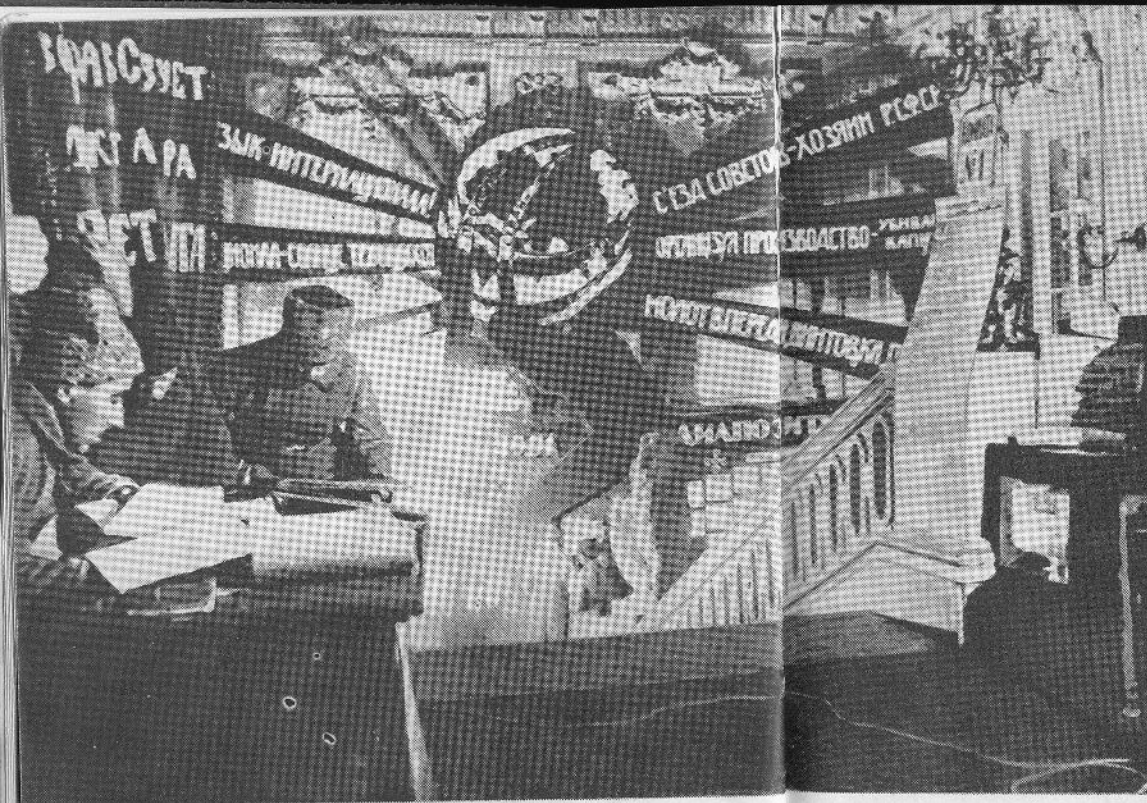


The 3rd All-Russia
Congress of Soviets.

•

Petrograd, April 1917.
Copies of the
newspaper *Izvestia
rabochikh i soldatskikh
deputatov* are sent to
factories and military
units.





Moscow, 1920. An exhibition of films and photographs dedicated to the 8th Congress of Soviets.

Baku, 1920. A group of delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East. John Reed, a U.S. journalist, was a guest at the congress.

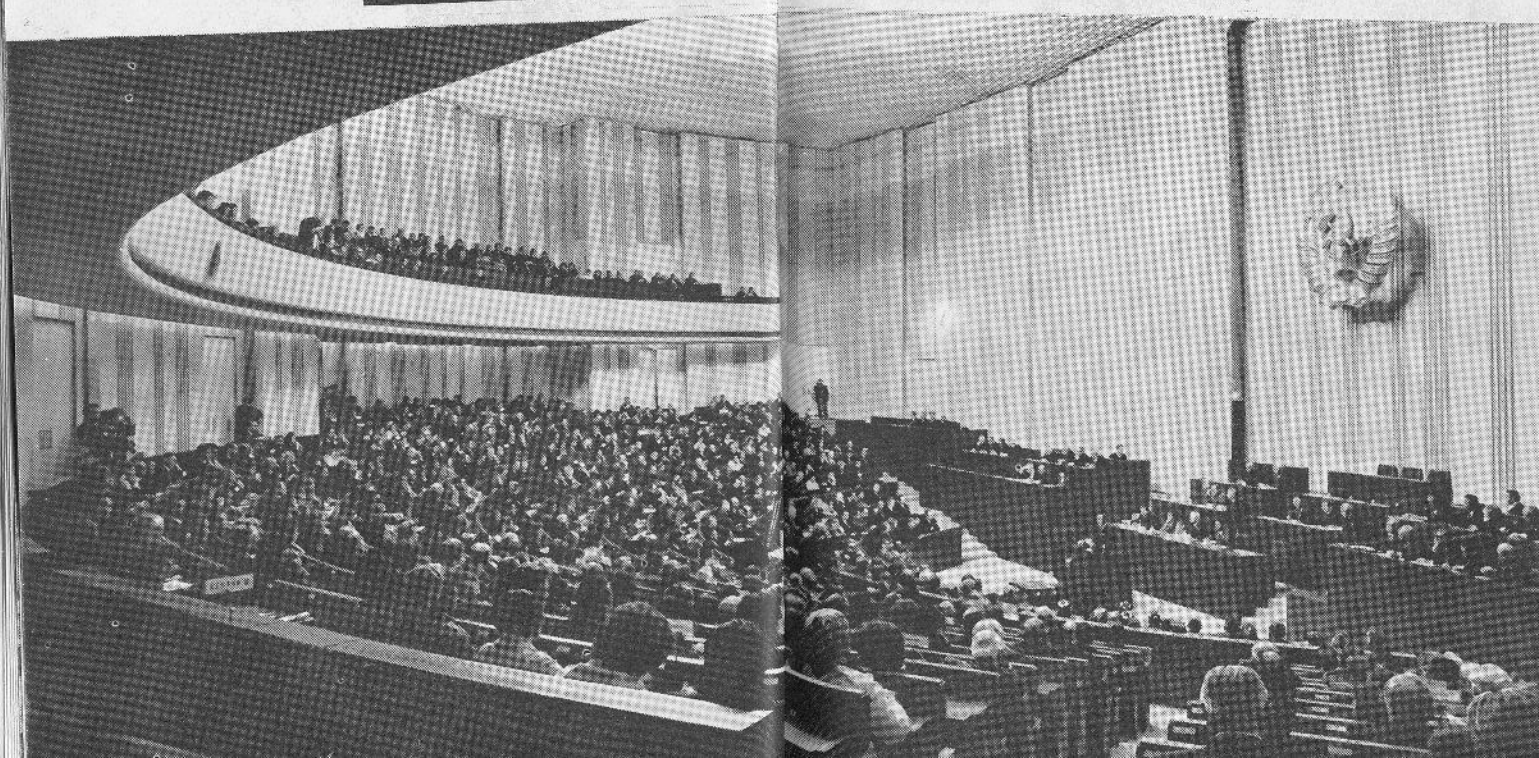
Moscow, 1929. A group of delegates to the 5th All-Union Congress of Soviets.



At the Seventh
(Special) Session of
the Supreme Soviet of
the USSR on October
4, 1977.



The draft of a new
USSR Constitution is
being discussed.



A group of workers
reading the draft of a
new USSR
Constitution, which
was submitted for
nationwide discussion.



The Soviets conducted struggles in solidarity with the trade unions, women's, youth and the many public organizations which emerged in the wake of the 1905 Revolution.

From their inception the Soviets began to act as a new form of people's power, as organs representing and defending the interests of the working people. In fact, the Soviets of 1905 formulated many of the principles which guide the Soviets to this day. One of the most important of these is that the Soviets, unlike bourgeois parliaments, implement the decisions they adopt. *They combine legislative and executive functions.*

Lenin understood that all preceding states in history were exploiter states based on suppression by the propertied minority of the vast indigent majority. Whatever a state's democratic embellishments, it always defended the interests of that part of society which exercised ownership of the means of production. Thus, in order to abolish exploitation the working class had to replace the old social and political system with a fundamentally new one, one that would work in the interests of the working people. Lenin's firm belief was that it was the people rallied by the Soviets that were to govern the state. Lenin, and the party of Bolsheviks* he led, were able to see the future working class (and then all-people's) state in the Soviets. Despite the savage suppression of the Soviets after the defeat of the 1905-1907 Revolution and the brutal reaction that followed, Lenin was convinced that this revolutionary, democratic form of working people's power could not be suppressed for good. Its time had come. His convictions were confirmed. During the February Revolution of 1917 the Soviets reappeared. They were stronger and broader than ever in their representation and were now called Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

* In 1903, during the voting on Party Rules, delegates to the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party split into two factions: *Bolsheviks* (from the Russian word "bolshinstvo" meaning majority) and *Mensheviks* (from the Russian "men-shinstvo" meaning minority). The Bolsheviks united consistent revolutionaries, who supported Lenin, and Mensheviks were opportunists who subsequently formed their own independent party.

History had presented the peoples of Russia with an extraordinary opportunity—a peaceful revolution. The slogan “All Power to the Soviets”, given the relationship of forces existing between the Soviets and the Provisional Government at that time, meant a peaceful transition of power. It did not signify an immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government. At that time the Provisional Government still had the support of the Soviets. The transfer of power could take place peacefully. The Provisional Government lacked the ability to use military force against the people since the Soviets enjoyed overwhelming support of the people and the armed forces. Thus, the Soviets could concentrate all power in their own hands. There was no need for an armed struggle.

Bourgeois historians, anxious to portray the Bolsheviks as bloodthirsty people, carefully gloss over this stage in the Russian Revolution and the position taken by Lenin and his party. Moreover, the slogan, “All Power to the Soviets”, was raised at a time when the Soviets were overwhelmingly controlled by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.* The Bolsheviks then were a distinct minority.

This historic fact, also, is largely overlooked by bourgeois historians anxious to portray Lenin and the Bolsheviks as solely motivated by the aim of seizing power. Unfortunately, due to the role played by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, the historic opportunity for a peaceful transfer of power to the working people was missed.

The people had overthrown Czarism but the imperialist war waged by the Czar and the Russian capitalists, which had taken a toll of millions of lives and brought ruin and starvation, was being vigorously prosecuted by the Provisional Government and supported by the Mensheviks

* Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), a Socialist Revolutionary Party set up in 1901, which expressed the interests of urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. It gradually gave up its petty-bourgeois revolutionary ideas and joined the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and landowners. After the 1917 Revolution the SRs organized a number of anti-Soviet mutinies. In 1923 the Party broke up and ceased to exist.

and Socialist Revolutionaries with the exception of small left wings of these parties. The vast estates and huge plants were still in the hands of the landowners and proprietors who continued to exploit the masses of workers and peasants.

The Provisional Government even refused to introduce an 8-hour working day. The many nationalities of Russia were still oppressed and without rights. Thus, the choice between the Soviets or the Provisional Government was one of Peace or War, Bread or Hunger, Land or Poverty, National Liberation or Oppression. The forces of counter-revolution were gathering strength to stifle the revolution. The path to a peaceful transfer of power to the Soviets was sealed off.

The Party of Bolsheviks led by Lenin launched a struggle to transform the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one. On November 7, 1917 (October 25 according to the old calendar effective in Russia up to February 1918), the Great October Socialist Revolution was accomplished, overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie and landowners. The 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets proclaimed the transition of power to the Soviets and the establishment of the first Soviet Government—the Council of People's Commissars—headed by Lenin.

The Congress also elected the All-Russia Central Executive Committee which was the highest legislative, executive and supervisory body. It will be noted in passing that its membership disproves the allegation of many bourgeois ideologists that the Committee was utterly dominated by Bolsheviks. For example, the Executive Committee elected by the 3rd Congress of Soviets consisted of 162 Bolsheviks, 122 Left SRs, five Mensheviks, five Right SRs and representatives of other parties. But the Mensheviks and SRs took up arms against the Soviets soon after and lost the trust of the people. The Communist Party then became the country's only leading party.

The very first acts of the Soviets (at the 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets, November 7, 1917) demonstrated the character of the new type of democracy. The Decree on Land expropriated the vast landed estates of the royal family and the churches and transferred them to the people.

This was carried out through the Land Committees and the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. All land was nationalized.

The Decree on Peace, drafted and read to the Congress by Lenin just like the Decree on Land, appealed to the war-weary peoples of the world to stop the imperialist war and conclude a just and democratic peace without annexations and indemnities.

The Soviet Government proclaimed a new foreign policy based on the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems and excluding war as a means of settling issues between peoples.

The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia granted full equality to the more than 100 nationalities of the former Russian Empire. The right to sovereignty and self-determination up to and including secession and the formation of independent states was written into law. The Soviet Government made it clear that any union of the peoples would be *voluntary*. The independence of Finland was recognized. All unequal treaties forced on China, Turkey, Afghanistan by the Czarist Government, as well as treaties concerning the three partitions of Poland, were nullified. All national and religious privileges and disabilities were abolished.

Separation of church and state was established. The privileged position of the Russian Orthodox Church (recognized as the State religion) was abolished. The right to profess or not to profess any religion was decreed.

Genuine equality of women with men was established for the first time in history. This included: equal pay, elimination of Czarist laws on the family, marriage and inheritance which discriminated against women, protection of mother and child, equal rights with men in education, public life, government and ownership of property.

Genuine freedom of speech, press and assembly and the right to organize in trade unions and mass organizations for working people were proclaimed.

The Declaration proclaimed Russia a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, instituted on the basis of a free union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national states, and outlined the Government's major priorities: abolition of exploitation of

man by man, suppression of resistance on the part of the exploiters and a socialist organization of society. The full text of the Declaration was included in the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic adopted in 1918.

The Soviet Government proceeded to lay the foundations of a socialist society. In January 1918 the 3rd Congress of Soviets adopted a Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People which was a Constitutional act formalizing the gains of the 1917 Revolution.

Private ownership of the means of production and national resources was abolished. The huge plants and resources owned by foreign (particularly, French and British) and Russian capital were expropriated without compensation. The landowners and capitalists were stripped not only of their ill-gotten wealth but of all economic and political power. The foundations were laid for a society *without exploiters*. To the capitalists in other countries all this represented a serious threat: above all they feared the force of the Soviet example. Winston Churchill called upon the world's mighty capitalist powers to strangle the newly-born workers' state "in its cradle". The armies of 14 countries, including the U.S., attempted to do just that.

The invasion of Soviet Russia was the "dirty war" of 1918-20, which rallied together foreign capitalists and domestic counter-revolutionaries led by the White Guardist generals Denikin, Yudenich and Wrangel, Admiral Kolchak and the Ukrainian nationalist Petlyura.

Thus, the first task and first test facing the young Soviet Republic was to fight for the right to exist, for the right of its people to determine their own destiny and choose their own form of government. It had to devote all of its energy and resources to defending itself from its enemies, internal as well as external. This could not but affect the character of the early work of the Soviets as well as compound the difficulties linked with building a new society. Perhaps those in the West who are so eager to pounce on Soviet "weaknesses" and "mistakes" would do well to consider how much the powers-that-be in our country and in the major capitalist countries of the West contributed to them.

That the Soviets met their first and most crucial test successfully attested to the *strength of the new type of democracy*. And in the light of six eventful decades one can look back and ask: *Would the peoples of the world have been able to halt and crush the blitzkrieg of Hitler and prevent the nightmare of fascism without the heroic and self-sacrificing struggle of the Soviet people? Would the peoples of Vietnam, Cuba, Angola and the oppressed peoples of the world be able to wage successful struggles for their liberation from imperialist aggression without the existence of the Soviet Union? Would the peace forces of the world be in a stronger or a weaker position to prevent the catastrophe of nuclear war without the vigorously waged struggle for peace led by the Soviet Union?*

CHAPTER II

WHO IS TO RUN THE STATE?

The Constitution adopted on July 10, 1918, by the Fifth Congress of Soviets put into law the major gains of the October Revolution and set the task of building a classless socialist society as the main goal. The right to elect and be elected Deputy to the Soviets on any level was granted to all working people, 18 years of age or over, regardless of sex, nationality, or religion. Only those who exploited the labor of others were deprived of these rights.

This restrictive Constitutional provision was from the very beginning regarded as a temporary, extreme measure which was to be lifted as soon as the danger of restoration of power of the exploiters was eliminated. Subsequent laws did remove this restriction.

Control over the nation's economy, resources, finances, educational system and culture and over its institutions of government—always held by the privileged, exploiting classes—was now for the first time in the hands of those who produced the national wealth, the working people of factory and field. For the first time a new type of political representative appeared on the scene of history. It was a representative who was not only chosen at the point of production in the factory but who *remained there*, who was not *separated* from the people or placed above them but one who *continued* to work at his or her job, earning the same pay as all other workers, sharing their problems and accomplishments. It was a representative who had to learn the art of government not as a *paid profession* but as a public service, a representative who had to regularly account to his or her constituents and who could be recalled at any time for failure to properly carry out the duties of the office.

The new system of government in Soviet Russia confronted serious problems. In the first place it was *new*. It had to break not only fresh but hard ground. It had to overcome not only age-old backwardness but age-old prejudices that had divided the more than 100 peoples who had constituted the former Czarist Empire. It had no facilities to train worker and peasant leaders in government, industry, agriculture, science, education and culture. It had to draw on the untapped, undeveloped talents of a working people who for centuries had been steeped in ignorance and kept in illiteracy. In pre-revolutionary Russia 73.7 per cent of the population were illiterate and in Central Asia illiteracy reached 98 per cent. Women were almost completely excluded from all spheres of public life, let alone government.

The very idea that ordinary working people could govern, let alone govern better than their "betters", was regarded with scorn by the professional bourgeois politicians. This attitude was crudely expressed in these words by *Novoe Vremya* (New Times), a reactionary newspaper in Czarist Russia, on the eve of the Great October Revolution:

"Let us assume for a moment that the Bolsheviks will win. Who will govern us then? Maybe the cooks, those beefsteak and cutlet proficient? Or firemen? Stableboys? Stokers? Or, maybe the nursery maids will hurry to State Council sessions after they have washed the diapers? The Bolsheviks will get an authoritative answer to this mad question from history."

In less raw form this scepticism (in reality class fear and hostility) still forms the basic material of today's more sophisticated Sovietologists. The truth is that the "nursery maids" did have to "hurry". They "hurried" from their menial chores to pore over alphabets, then to secondary schools and then to institutes and universities. Never did so many "stableboys", "cooks" and "stokers" do so much "hurrying" and "sweating" to make up for the years their "betters" had denied them the right to learn and develop their talents. Never did a government open wider the doors of learning.

The country's young people, who formed a union of young Communists in 1918 (today this union is called the All-Russia Leninist Young Communist League or Komsomol), made an especially valuable contribution to the campaign to do away with illiteracy. They learned themselves and taught others, thus helping their elder comrades, the Communists.

The entire world, including those who sneered, today know the result of that "hurrying". One of the greatest lessons of history taught by the new Soviet state (and one of its most *democratic* achievements) was that it demonstrated the miracles which can be accomplished once the latent talents of the working people are given full opportunity to develop. The six decades of government by working people did indeed give an "authoritative answer" to the sceptics and pessimists.

As a matter of fact, Communists and YCLers always had to hurry. They hurried from their machine tools and ploughs to join the fighters against foreign interventionists and White Guardists during the Civil War of 1918-1920; they hurried to the front to fight Hitler's hordes during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945; and they hurried when a new life had to be built. They are hurrying today as well—at plants and factories, in the fields and at the biggest national construction sites, such as the BAM (the Baikal-Amur Mainline) for one, and in research laboratories, in short, wherever energy and dedication, strength and knowledge are required.

Our "free enterprise" system spawned conglomerates such as Exxon, Standard Oil, ITT and General Motors, who more than ever dominate the life of the country. The U.S. standard of living, once relatively high, was achieved not as a result of the laws and mores of the "free enterprise" system but despite them. It was *won* by U.S. workers in militant struggles against anti-labor legislation passed by big business dominated Congress, state legislatures and city councils and against the anti-union injunctions of the courts. The high U.S. standard of living is being devoured by inflation, the declining dollar, mass unemployment, the energy crisis, the housing crisis, the crisis of our cities—in a word by crisis-living.

Our agriculture, blessed by nature with an extraordinarily favorable climate and rich fertile soil, has likewise experienced the "blessings" of the market laws of "free enterprise" development. Bumper harvests of grain, corn and other crops are regarded as calamities second only to droughts and famines. The U.S. Congress votes huge sums of money to the Department of Agriculture to pay the owners of vast farms to curtail production.

The family farm, once the backbone of our town hall democracy, has all but disappeared. It has been gobbled up, as most family stores and small businesses, by the same financial octopi who devoured our industry and national resources.

In Soviet society, for the first time in history, the national economy was developed not by the jungle laws of free enterprise but by the basic law of socialist development: Everything for the benefit of human beings. The all-round development of the economy was scientifically planned by the entire people under the leadership of the Soviet Government and the Communist Party.

The Soviets stimulated the initiative and developed the on-the-job experience of millions of Soviet workers of factory and field. They put to work the knowledge of the tens of thousands of economists, technicians and other specialists the Soviet system had newly trained. The Soviet national economy always developed in accordance with carefully elaborated plans, to which of special importance were the yearly consolidated plans. GOELRO (State Commission for the Electrification of Russia) was the first long-term plan drawn up under Lenin's supervision in 1920 and envisaging the construction of 30 thermo- and hydro-power plants during a period of 10 to 15 years (and that immediately after the Civil War!).

Subsequently national economic planning was based on five-year plans, the guidelines for which were outlined by the Soviet Communist Party at its congresses. The First Five-Year Plan whose aim was to build the *foundations of socialism*, was inaugurated on October 1, 1928. One year later as it was hitting its stride, the U.S. was in the throes of the Great Depression and the world in deep general crisis. Never before was such a dramatic contrast between the

fruits of the anarchy of capitalist production and the benefits of planned socialist production demonstrated on the world stage of history. For the first time every plant, every factory, mine, hydro-electric station was *planned*. They were planned at the point of production with the participation of the workers, tied in with the country's needs and with the scheduled figures of the Gosplan (State Planning Committee under the USSR Council of Ministers), a body set up in 1921, and were then unified in an overall state plan which became law after approval.

The Soviets were a kind of instrument for the widest democratic discussion and debate which reflected differences of *opinion* and not a clash of *conflicting* class interests. The very peoples' character and composition of the Soviets precluded that. However, the basic difference lies not only in that millions *planned and discussed but in that they implemented decisions which determined their own lives. This character of the Soviets, combining the functions of legislation and execution, is one of the features of government that distinguishes the Soviet system from our own.*

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for most Americans acquainted only with the ways of our free enterprise system to understand is how it is possible for a government to plan, direct and control tens of thousands of enterprises. Only private industry (more accurately, monopolies) motivated by the search for profit, can operate industry and enterprises efficiently and economically and produce the kind of abundance demanded by the people—so it is said. This premise today is being questioned as never before by millions of Americans.

Efficient economy is hardly possible without efficient management. Mastering the science of management did not come easily to the Soviets. Running tens of thousands of enterprises, as the leaders of the Soviet Government themselves publicly admit, has still not been mastered fully. It is admissions of this kind, incidentally, that our press concentrates upon and exaggerates in order to conceal the far more significant achievements made despite all the difficulties. Mastering the science of management of a complex economy in the interests of the people even on the level which has been achieved, is perhaps one of the greatest

examples of the workings and benefits of this new democracy, a result of the working people's creative initiative and their responsible attitude to their work.

I would like to say a few words about Soviet agriculture. The transformation of agriculture from the near-medieval state it was in before the 1917 Revolution into a socialist one, based on huge agro-industrial complexes run in accordance with a single national plan, is one of the most important achievements of the Soviet system.

In pre-revolutionary Russia peasants made up two-thirds of the population, of which 65 per cent were poor peasants, 20 per cent middle peasants and 15 per cent so-called kulaks or rich peasants exploiting the poor ones. To reorganize small individual farms into big and technically well-equipped collective ones under the plan for cooperation of agriculture was the only way to deliver working peasantry from economic oppression.

The path toward modernization of agriculture in the USSR was not forced on the peasants, though serious and harmful excesses were committed in the heat of collectivization in the late 1920s and early 1930s. These were promptly stopped. The kulaks were not permitted to grow into sharks who could devour the little farms. Soviet agriculture was collectivized voluntarily by demonstrating the superiority of a new, more efficient form of production. Great help came from industry, heavy industry in the first place, built up at such sacrifice and effort, supplying the farms with the necessary tractors, combines and other equipment.

State farms were set up in the country along with the collective farms of a cooperative type. The historical gap between town and country was being constantly narrowed in both the material and cultural standards of living, a process which continues today as well.

The advances of industrialization and the changes in the countryside—all a result of fulfilment of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932)—strengthened the new social system.

With the successful completion of the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-37) the victory of socialism was firmly established. In just 20 years a new social system which for the

first time in history eliminated exploitation of man by man, had in the main been built. There no longer existed exploiter classes—no landowners, capitalists or kulaks. The classes that still existed—the workers and peasants—were non-antagonistic, cooperative classes.

The victory of socialism in the Soviet Union was written into law by the Constitution of the USSR adopted by the 8th Congress of Soviets of the USSR in 1936. By 1937 socialist ownership of the means of production had become the key form of ownership and accounted for 99.8 per cent of industrial and 98.5 per cent agricultural production.

The Third Five-Year Plan period, which started in 1938 and was cut short in 1941 by the war, had as its main aim the consolidation and further development of the socialist system. It will be recalled that while in 1917 Soviet Russia's share in world industrial output was less than three per cent, in 1928 it was about 5 per cent and in 1937 already nearly 10 per cent. The USSR still lagged considerably behind the major capitalist countries in per capita production. Catching up with and surpassing them in labor productivity constituted the last decisive hurdle in the race with capitalism.

CHAPTER III

AT THE FRONT AND IN THE REAR

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union which began on June 22, 1941, cruelly interrupted the peaceful construction in the USSR and the competition between the two social systems. One can only speculate *how much farther advanced the USSR would today have been in that contest had it not been compelled to devote its entire energy and resources to fight for its very life and to save the world from fascism.* Twenty million people killed, 25 million homeless, 1,710 towns destroyed, more than 70,000 villages demolished, 32,000 industrial enterprises reduced to rubble, nearly 98,000 collective and 1,876 state farms plundered, 30 per cent of the national wealth destroyed—such were the losses suffered by the Soviet Union in the war.

The Nazi invasion put the Soviet socialist system to its most severe test. The foundations laid in the brief historical period of two decades proved to be strong indeed. Other powerful, long-established states, such as France, the cradle of bourgeois democracy, collapsed before the Nazi blitzkrieg. It was left to the world's only socialist country, the newly-created Soviet State, to provide the necessary strength, sacrifice and will to defeat the most powerful military machine the world had ever known.

The war transformed the work of the Soviets from top to bottom. They had one task: to mobilize the entire country, its resources and people, to drive out the enemy and defeat fascism. On June 30, 1941, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Communist Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government set up the State Committee for Defense of the USSR, an emergency body of the highest state authority, to provide all the means and materiel to defend the country and to achieve victory.

The war could not but affect the functioning of the Soviets. The life and death struggle demanded above all decisiveness, fulfilment of vital tasks. Military functions took precedence and the Soviets had to primarily concern themselves with military matters directly or indirectly.

But the Soviets and the Communist Party not only had the task of directing the military struggle at the front and the partisan struggle in the rear. They had the equally difficult job of organizing the rear to support the front with arms, munitions and food supplies. One can get some idea of the superhuman efforts and tremendous organizational skill demanded of the Soviets if one considers that under their leadership in five months, from July to November 1941, more than 1,360 large industrial enterprises and more than 10 million people were evacuated thousands of miles from the threatened areas of Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia to the more secure regions of the East. All those people had to be settled, fed and clothed, while the plants had to be put into operation. Three months later the production at many of them exceeded the pre-war level.

The war put to the most severe test the people's support for, and the viability of, the Soviet system. Hitler counted on the collapse of the Soviet state (as had been the case with many Western European countries) with the first savage blows, and especially, on strife between the different nationalities living in the Soviet Union. But the Soviet people had become even more firmly attached to the socialist system, deeply convinced of the advantages of the socialist economy. The union of the friendly classes and nationalities had made the Soviet State far stronger than any of the countries in the anti-Hitler coalition.

The war confirmed the correctness of the Soviet Communist Party's nationalities policy which resulted in the solution of the nationalities question, one of the most complex ones. Thus, on all basic issues the socialist system met the test with flying colors. The Soviet people emerged victorious from the fierce clash with fascism. Their army liberated not only their own country but also many other states from the invaders.

The task now was to restore the war-ravaged economy. In the course of fulfilling the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1946-

50), the destruction of the war was in the main overcome. Great cities like Leningrad, Stalingrad, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa and Sevastopol which had been devastated or suffered heavy destructions, were rebuilt as were tens of thousands of towns, villages, factories and collective and state farms. The pre-war level of output was surpassed in many important fields.

By 1959 socialism in the USSR had won final and complete victory.

Many changes had occurred in the world. The international balance of forces had changed. A socialist community of nations and a world system of socialism had come into existence. A wave of national liberation was beginning to sweep away colonialism. Powerful peace movements were developing. The Communist and working-class revolutionary movements were growing in the capitalist countries.

The favorable international situation enabled the Soviet Union, for the first time, to primarily devote its energy and resources to the task of building a mature socialist society, a society so developed industrially, agriculturally, scientifically, technically and culturally that it could on its own foundations proceed to build the material basis of communism.

This is a prolonged historical process. It requires all-round development to such a level that it creates an abundance sufficient to satisfy all the reasonable needs of the people. Thus the time will come when the socialist principle of distribution—from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work—will be replaced by the communist principle: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

Communism presupposes the highest social consciousness and the highest moral standards in social relations. In such a society labor for the good of society will become the prime vital requirement of everyone, and the ability of each person will be employed to the greatest benefit of the people.

This stage will be characterized by elimination of the gap between town and country and the differences between mental and physical labor. It demands the highest develop-

ment of socialist democracy, the widest involvement of Soviet citizens in the work of the Soviets. To most Americans, unfamiliar with present-day socialist society which already contains many of the features of the future communist society, all this may seem to be an unattainable goal. However, the road already traveled along this path in the brief historical period of six decades, demonstrated that this is hardly a utopia.

The more improved the Soviet political system, of which the Communist Party has been and remains the nucleus, the sooner and more efficiently will the bodies of public self-government begin to discharge the functions of state institutions.

CHAPTER IV

THE RIGHT TO LEAD

That the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with its more than 17 million members is the nucleus of the country's political system is due to its many-year experience of social activity. Incidentally, this does not at all mean that it substitutes for the Soviets of People's Deputies, the trade unions (130 million members), the YCL (over 41 million) and other public organizations—all part of this system.

The growing scale and complexity of communist construction require increasingly improved political, organizational and ideological guidance of the enormous creative effort. It is only the Party that can cope with this work. (I've explained before why there is only one political party in the Soviet Union.)

It is the Party's prerogative creatively to develop and enrich Marxist-Leninist theory, sum up the experience of the building of socialism in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and to combine theory with practice. In its work to accomplish these tasks the Party outlines the main directions of social development.

The public organizations that are part of the Soviet political system are in no need of everyday tutelage. They carry out their duties quite independently which does not contradict coordinated activity of all the forces of the country's democratic development.

Most Americans find it hard to understand the relationship between the Soviet people and their Communist Party. Long experience has taught them that political parties are, above all, concerned with their own selfish interests and not the needs of the people. Thus, politicians are regarded with scepticism and politics itself is looked upon as a dirty game.

From the limited viewpoint of their own experience, it is difficult for most Americans to conceive of a leading political party that could be different.

Our big business press has exploited this distrust of politicians and political parties to present a distorted picture of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its relationships with the Soviet people and Government. It has portrayed Communists as enjoying a privileged position. And for Americans familiar with the privileges, patronage and profiteering enjoyed by the party in power in our country this is not hard to believe. Since to most Americans the history of the CPSU is virtually unknown, our press can get away with this distortion.

Have there been cases where Communists have abused their positions for personal gain? It would be naive to expect that among the 17 million members of the CPSU there were no "bad apples". But such people are rare exceptions, and as the People's Control and Soviet press reveal, they are soon discovered, punished severely and expelled from the Party.

The entire history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union demonstrates that far from enjoying privileges, Communists have always taken upon themselves the heaviest burdens. Deep dedication and courageous self-sacrifice have been and are the distinguishing characteristics of Soviet Communists. These are not mere pious words with which Americans are only too familiar. They are demonstrated in deeds. It was above all the Communists who gave their lives, suffered torture, imprisonment, exile in Siberia (in those days an out-of-the-way, lonely place) and abroad in the struggle against Czarism and capitalist exploitation. It was the Communists who organized and led the Great October Revolution and other outstanding endeavors most often ignored by the bourgeois press.

During the grim years of imperialist intervention and Civil War (1918-1920) more than 300,000 Communists, half of the Party membership, fought with the Red Army at the front. The only "privilege" Communists enjoyed was to be first in battle. In peace as in war, the "privilege" Communists enjoyed was again to lead. The struggle to

transform backward, illiterate Russia into the advanced country it is today was complex and protracted. Communists distinguished themselves by their selfless work in every construction project during industrialization of the country and in every village during collectivization of agriculture. The investments needed for both called for the kind of belt tightening that few other countries experienced. Communists enjoyed the "privilege" of tightening their belts more than others. It was also Communists who took upon themselves the whole responsibility for educating the masses of illiterate people throughout the country.

The fight to save their country and the world from fascism again found Soviet Communists in the frontlines. Before especially hard battles the command often was: "Communists, forward!" More than 800,000 members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave their lives leading these battles. Members of the Central Committee were placed at the most decisive sections of the fronts and in the most difficult posts. They organized the underground struggle in Nazi-occupied areas. They were commanders of partisan brigades.

The Soviet Communist Party not only grew greatly in prestige but in numbers during the war. The highest honor was to be given the "privilege" of joining the Party before going into battle. More than 3,500,000 were granted that "privilege". Though the Party suffered heavy losses, its membership had almost doubled. After the war, Communists were given the "privilege" to lead by example in repairing the incalculable destruction.

All this, the essential and distinguishing characteristics of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is ignored and concealed by our press. Instead, it portrays the CPSU as the organizers and wardens of one vast Gulag Archipelago. It focusses on the period of the Stalin personality cult as if nothing has been done by the CPSU and Soviet Government in the more than a quarter of a century to rectify the tragic errors, rehabilitate the victims, restore and extend Soviet democracy and take measures to guarantee that such violations of Party and Soviet democracy can never again occur. Our press rarely even notes that it was the CPSU itself which in a demonstration of honesty,

self-criticism and self-rectification no other Party in history ever matched, revealed these tragic events to the world. Our press ignores the new Soviet Constitution reflecting the most genuine democracy ever achieved. However, in violation of elementary principles of journalism it gives the widest uncritical, unchecked coverage to every slander, lie and half-truth uttered, say, by Solzhenitsyn who has shown the world how to turn "dissidence" into a multi-million-dollar business.

Our press has stopped the clock of Soviet history at that tragic point (just as it concentrates on every negative feature of Soviet life) in order to blot out the human world which Soviet Communists had done so much to create. It was created by the Soviet people led by the Communists with terrible suffering, overcoming unprecedented hardships and yes, making costly, tragic mistakes. But, it was created!

I met many Soviet Communists in dozens of huge industrial plants, in numerous hydro-electric stations and vast construction sites, in countless collective and state farms, in scientific and cultural establishments. I got to know many of them as friends and neighbors. The history of the Communist Party is their personal history. For me, it assumed human form. Communists are not the ruthless, humorless fanatics that our press has portrayed for six decades. They are ordinary people whose stature was raised by the heroic deeds they had to perform, by the ordeals they had to endure and overcome. They are very much like what Americans would be if we, too, could live for six decades without exploiting or being exploited, without landlords, doctors' bills, racism, unemployment or inflation—without crisis-living.

I also observed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at work at one of its forums, the 24th Congress in 1971. To begin with, congresses of the Communist Party are regarded by the Soviet people as milestones in the history of their country. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is not based upon opportunistic alliances of diverse elements like our two major parties. The CPSU is not a party embracing classes with sharply conflicting class interests. Today, it is a party of the whole Soviet people in

a society of cooperative classes and social strata: workers, collective farmers and intelligentsia. Thus, the wheeling and dealing, the compromises and double-crosses which characterize conventions and the activities of our two major parties are alien to Soviet party life.

I was already familiar with many of the issues before the Congress. I had discussed them during my trips round the country. In August 1970 I had made a 14,000-mile tour that included Siberia and the Far East. I visited Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Lake Baikal, Khabarovsk and Birobidjan (the Jewish Autonomous Region). I had met many of the future congress delegates in the mines of Makeyevka (the Ukraine), in the fields of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, at construction sites in the taiga of Siberia and in the industrial plants and universities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Ashkhabad.

At the Moscow Ball Bearing plant I had asked one of the delegates, Aleksei Viktorov: "What do the Five-Year Plans mean to you?" Viktorov who had spent 34 of his 53 years working in the plant answered me in two words: "My life". Viktorov, who was elected to the Central Committee of the CPSU at that Congress, was typical of many Soviet workers I had met. He was not only a master mechanic and an inventor with 40 technical improvements to his credit. He surrounded himself with a group of young workers whom he trained. He was also an active member of the Artistic Council of the Mossovet Theater, one of Moscow's leading theaters. Now he is a Secretary of the USSR Central Trade Union Council, the leading Soviet trade union body.

I was struck by the contrast between the "pre-convention discussion" that precedes the conventions of our two major parties and the discussions in preparation for the 24th Congress of the CPSU. Our discussions, as Americans know, take the form of public hearings on the election platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties. These are largely framed by slick corporation lawyers wise in the ways of doubletalk, escape clauses and loopholes. At the "hearings", those who pull the parties' strings go through the motions of listening to "all sides". No one, least of all the mass of the American people, take these hearings

seriously. How can they when even the pledges contained in the party platforms are rarely redeemed?

This, as I observed, was hardly the case with the discussions in preparation for the 24th Congress of the CPSU. The draft of the 9th Five-Year Plan which was to be the main domestic point on the Congress agenda, had been published in full, well in advance, in all the newspapers and in tens of millions of booklets. The draft plan served as the basis for the "hearings" in every plant, farm, school and scientific institution I had visited.

The discussions were concrete. They were preceded by a check-up. Each plant, farm, and institution had to account on the fulfillment of its goals in the 8th Five-Year Plan, the draft of which had been adopted at the 23rd Congress. On my tours, I had witnessed one huge nationwide check-up of targets and responsibilities. Now, I more fully understood the wise words of the Komsomol secretary of the Ust Ilim hydro-electric power station under construction in Siberia's taiga. I had asked him to explain how he regarded the process of construction of communism. And with the directness of people who live by solving problems, he had answered me: "In economic terms, to move toward communism we have to advance from one concrete project to another."

That explains why "plan" and "check-up" are the two most important words in the Soviet business vocabulary.

As early as 1918, Lenin had pointed out: "...probably for the first time in the modern history of civilized nations, it (the Soviet Government—*Ed.*) deals pre-eminently with economics rather than with politics." How much truer is this today when the task before the Soviet people is to create the material basis of communist society. To achieve this goal the directing role of millions of Communists is decisive.

At the time of the 24th Congress, the Soviet Communist Party had 13,755,000 members, 73 per cent of whom were concentrated in the sectors of material production. It was this powerful force of the most advanced, most dedicated members of Soviet society who, as I observed, constituted the driving force in achieving the goals of the Party congresses. It is a tradition with Soviet Communists to hear

at their congresses reports on what was accomplished during the period since their preceding forum.

The check-up on the fulfillment of the 8th Five-Year Plan was, indeed, a public accounting. (Neither the Republican nor Democratic Party has ever conducted such an accounting, matching their pledges against their performances.)

It was on the solid basis of the achievements of the 1965-1970 period that the higher goals projected by the 9th Five-Year Plan were discussed at the 24th Congress. And who discussed them? The same people who had taken the lead in accomplishing the tasks set by the 23rd Congress. I was first of all impressed by the composition of the delegates.

Of the 4,963 delegates, 74.4 per cent (three-fourths) had been elected delegates for the first time. This fresh blood infused the deliberations with vitality and enthusiasm. (As I had observed, the conventions of our two major parties are largely made up of the same party hacks.) The delegates to the 24th Congress included 1,195 workers from industry, construction and transport. There were 870 farm workers, two-thirds of whom were rank-and-file collective and state farmers. Present were 370 heads of industrial enterprises and construction projects, 82 state-farm directors and 148 collective-farm chairmen. Among the delegates were 96 Academicians and corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and Union Republics. There were 120 educators, writers, composers, artists and actors. The delegates to the 24th Congress of the CPSU unanimously approved the Peace Program projected in the report by Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

At the 1968 Democratic Convention in our country the issue of war or peace in Vietnam was being "democratically debated". Vietnam was being torn apart, tens of thousands of Americans were being arrested, thousands imprisoned, hundreds beaten, many killed in the midst of that "debate". Our Moscow correspondents, who decry Soviet "unanimity" would search in vain to find in the USSR opponents of the Peace Program adopted by the 24th Congress.

The contrast in respect to reports and discussion on the domestic issues was equally revealing. It was a Congress of

achievers and problem solvers. In contrast to the platitudes one hears at the conventions of our two major parties, the reports and discussions were concrete and analytical. I was particularly impressed by the attitude as well as the knowledge displayed by the delegates from work shops and farms.

Their attitude was expressed by Proskurin, a sturdy steel worker from a huge mill in Zaporozhe (a Soviet Pittsburgh). "We are masters of our enterprise!" he told the delegates. And he proceeded to link his life with that of his plant. "I'm 31 and have worked 11 years in the plant. Here I found my way of life. My comrades helped and encouraged me to advance myself. I finished secondary school and then a specialized technical school." And Proskurin hardly needed to add, "there are many like me". The "many" greeted his words with an ovation. Then Proskurin got down to business. Like all the others he had to account: "Since the 23rd Congress our plant, led by our 3,000 Communists, improved efficiency 28 per cent and increased profits 39 per cent. Our youth produced 600,000 tons of steel above schedule and our gift to the 24th Congress will be 5.2 million tons of steel. We constructed 2,000 apartments, five dining rooms, two rest homes and a clinic."

Proskurin then frankly stated the serious problems that had yet to be overcome. "We still have fly-by-nights who flit from one job to another." And he stressed the need for a sharper struggle to raise labor discipline—still a very serious problem in the Soviet economy. And what did he propose? "We don't need new laws. The old ones need to be better enforced. Above all, we need to imbue every single worker with a deep sense of responsibility." And he concluded: "For we are the masters of our country and making our life better and better depends on us!" That about summed up the atmosphere of the Congress. Power is in the hands of the people! A better life for the first time in history depends on them! Therefore—the strict accounting of how that power is being used to improve the life of the people, to advance the country and to insure a peaceful world! Therefore—the adoption of a draft Five-Year Plan that sets goals for all! Therefore—frank criticism and self-criticism to remove the obstacles! Therefore—the striving

for unanimity not through concealing or glossing over weaknesses but in frankly stating and overcoming them!

I regret that I was not able to attend the 25th and 26th CPSU Congresses. But still one thing is definite: those congresses too were as businesslike and constructive as the previous ones. But you can judge for yourself, because much of what was discussed became known to the public at large in one way or another. Reports on new economic and social achievements, on new complex problems, and above all, on new Soviet peace initiatives could not have been missed.

CHAPTER V

HOW MANY BOSSES DOES A PLANT HAVE?

Before going into the work of the Soviets—the basis of state power in the Soviet Union—I'd like to say a few words on the democratic organization of production and the functioning of the People's Control directly associated with it.

The very essence of Soviet power is that it ushered in genuine industrial democracy. It not only, for the first time, placed political power into the hands of the majority—the working people. It gave them economic power. Those who produced now directed production and distribution. They became masters of their enterprises who could settle absolutely all questions involved in the organization of production in the interests of society as a whole. It eliminated non-productive classes which had controlled the means of production, national resources and profits. It is this revolution in economic power which has been the particular target of attack in the West. For it is the force of this example that the non-productive classes in power fear.

Genuine industrial democracy would threaten Exxon's staggering \$1.5 billion profits which it raked in in the third quarter of 1979 when the American people were reeling from the effects of a 60-per-cent increase in gasoline prices.

Control by a democratic majority of the economic goose that lays the golden eggs is the essential test of industrial democracy. It is a test the proponents of capitalism avoid like the plague and for good reason. The arithmetic of a social system, like its budget, reveals its true political and social content.

Ten five-year plans vividly record the arithmetic of socialism. Take 1971-75, the Ninth Five-Year Plan. Professor Alexander Birman, renowned Soviet economist,

in his analysis of the distribution of the Soviet national income forcefully demonstrates the fruits of genuine industrial democracy. The Soviet national income for 1971-75 totalled 1,563 billion roubles. Where did it go?

About 666 billion went to workers, farmers and their families in the form of wages. Approximately 119 billion was used for pensions, allowances, grants, etc. Some 301 billion was spent on education, health and other social needs. Another 67 billion was set aside for science, research and development. Some 88 billion was put into construction of housing, schools, hospitals, cinemas, clubs, theaters and sports facilities. Around 233 billion was invested in building new enterprises or reconstructing and improving old ones. About 89 billion was provided for defense.

Thus, with the exception of the latter expenditure, the national income went directly or indirectly into improving the living standards of the Soviet people.

Actually, the Soviet people get back from the state five times the amount they contribute in taxes. This is in the form of pensions, free medical aid, free education up to and including the universities, subsidized housing, subsidized prices on essential commodities such as meat, bread, milk, etc.

In 1977 the Soviet people paid 20.5 billion roubles in taxes. In the same year they received back 99.5 billion roubles in the above benefits.

The bookkeeping system of our free enterprise system is quite different. The missing item in the Soviet accounts is indeed important in our scheme of things. It is what makes free enterprise "free" for the monopolies. Their "industrial democracy" is illustrated in the profits for 1978 as reported by *Fortune* magazine on July 16, 1979.

Name	Assets (in billion dollars)	Net profit (in million dollars)
American Telephone and Telegraph	103,326,945	5,272,606
Bank of America	94,902,464	497,920
Citibank	87,190,709	469,814
Prudential Life Insurance	50,054,152	269,068

Name	Assets (in billion dollars)	Net profit (in million dollars)
Aetna Life and Casualty	24,268,190	501,621
Sears Roebuck Retail Chain	17,946,336	921,523
General Telephone and Electric	16,269,462	627,159
Safeway Stores	12,550,569	146,118
United Airline	3,880,298	302,255

Total corporate profits soared from \$70 billion in 1970 to \$240 billion in 1979. Even adjusting for price changes, profits doubled in the near-decade. On the other hand, real average workers' earnings (after adjustment for increases in prices) were lower in 1979 than in any year since 1970.

The columnist, TRB, noted: "A single elite group of 102 gigantic corporations now controls 48 per cent of the assets, and 53 per cent of the profits of all manufacturing firms in the U.S." (*New Republic*, August 22-29, 1970).

This then is the *little* difference in economic accounting that spells the *big* difference in industrial democracy in the USSR and U.S.

The proponents of free enterprise portray the capitalist system as not only the best but as eternal. Socialism is presented as an aberration to human development. This is not new. All previous ruling classes which have since disappeared from history regarded their social system as eternal—slave owners, feudal lords, and now the capitalists. U.S. capitalists of today consider nothing as inviolate as their capitalist system of production relations. Production relations in the U.S. economy are sharply defined, more so than in many countries of the West. Everything that has to do with production is solely the prerogative of the owners of enterprises. True, after years of bitter struggle they have been compelled to concede that wages, fringe benefits, even working conditions, are negotiable. But not the determination of the production process itself. The rate of production, which in the profit system determines the degree of exploitation, is held to be inviolable. Automation of industry, which in the hands of

the monopolies spells mass unemployment for the workers, is a particular prerogative that is stubbornly upheld.

This system of production relations compels many American workers to recognize how fleeting and insecure their gains are. Industrial democracy, even in the narrow sense of permitting union and plant committees to negotiate working conditions, wage rates, safety, etc., has always been limited. To begin with, this right is limited to the section of the U.S. labor force that is organized.

The Wall Street Journal (Jan. 3, 1980), the organ of big business, bluntly notes this fact. Speaking of the contracts negotiated by auto and steel unions, it points out: "While these contracts get a lot of publicity, they cover only a few million of the nearly 98 million employed Americans. More than three-fourths of U.S. employees will get what the boss decides to give them because they aren't covered by union contracts."

One of the major differences between Soviet "working" democracy and our "talking" democracy is not only that the former embraces all aspects of life and the production process but that it is stable. It is firmly established in the Fundamentals of Labor Legislation and the 1977 Constitution of the USSR, as I shall show later.

Until 1970 the 1922 code of labor laws, USSR Supreme Soviet decrees, resolutions of the Supreme Soviet Presidium and the Soviet Government, as well as laws of the Union Republics regulated Soviet labor relations. They served their purpose in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

What should be the relationship between workers and management in conditions of workers' power? What is the role of trade unions under socialism? These questions had been dealt with in many of the laws and resolutions. But still differences arose even in the leading ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the early stages of Soviet power. Some, Leon Trotsky, particularly, minimized the role of the trade unions and called for a barracks-type discipline in production. The overwhelming majority of the Central Committee of the CPSU led by Lenin, firmly rejected and defeated this approach. Lenin stressed that mass involvement of the working people in the manage-

ment of the national economy was a key prerequisite for success of communist construction. He believed that an even greater number of workers and laboring peasants should be enlisted in the work of administering industry and the national economy generally. Lenin emphasized that the trade unions were schools of administration and schools of communism and that through training in the unions, millions of workers would master not only the art of management of production but acquire the skills to manage state and public affairs.

Lenin's ideas on management, expressed in these vivid words, have since been the guidelines of Soviet production: "We must learn to combine the 'public meeting' democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work." Here was a definition of industrial democracy! Collective plant discussion and resolution of problems with each one, worker and director, having personal responsibility for his particular job. This is the basic principle governing production relations in Soviet industry.

Let me now turn to Article 97 of the Fundamentals of Labor Legislation of the USSR and Union Republics. It states: "Factory workers and office employees participate in the management of production through the trade union and other forms of public activity open to them." Moreover, "it is the duty of the administration of an enterprise, institution and organization to provide conditions which ensure the participation of the factory workers and office employees in the management of production."

Enter any Soviet place of work and you will come upon well-appointed offices of the trade union committees. These consist of commissions concerned with matters of safety, health, culture, education, press, housing and sports. There are also special children's, youth and women's commissions.

Production meetings are a permanent feature of public activity in all Soviet enterprises. Established Nov. 6, 1969, by joint decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR

and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, they function in more than 143,000 enterprises, construction sites and state farms involving more than 6,000,000 workers. Working people are drawn by them into dealing with problems of production. They meet at least once or twice every three months (more often if necessary) at enterprises and once a month in the work shops or departments.

Of great importance to industrial advancement are the scientific and technical societies at plants and factories, as well as societies of production innovators and inventors.

Production in Soviet socialist society is aimed at satisfying the material and spiritual needs of the people to the maximum while providing healthy and safe working conditions for those engaged in production.

The achievement of this objective depends on the joint, cooperative efforts of those in the sphere of management and those in direct production. The interests of workers and management are identical. But this does not mean that relations between them are always smooth. Sometimes workers have to be protected from excessive administrative zeal and red tape, from executives who fail to organize production properly, ignore labor laws and violate or abuse the rights of workers. These rights are spelled out in detail in a number of articles of the Fundamentals of Labor Legislation. Article 96, for instance, says that the working people "participate in the drawing up and realization of state economic development plans; in determining matters bearing on the distribution and utilization of the material and financial resources".

Now what is the role of the enterprises in the distribution of resources? What share of the profits do they get and how is it disposed? In 1976 the monetary income of the Soviet national economy amounted to 189.3 billion roubles and the profits to 106.4 billion. Of this sum 60.6 billion was contributed to the USSR budget and the rest (45.8 billion) was placed at the disposal of enterprises. This was divided as follows: 9.5 billion for capital investment; more than 19 billion for economic incentives; over 17 billion for research and development work, for the training of personnel, for bonuses and for health and recreation centers for workers and their families, and for sports and cultural activities.

How the money is spent is decided *jointly* by management and the trade unions. The decisions only take effect *after* they are approved by workers at general meetings.

Article 20 regulates the relations between management and the trade unions. It gives the unions the right to compel the dismissal of executives under certain circumstances. It states: "On demand of a trade union body (not below district level), the administration shall be obliged to cancel a labor agreement with an executive or relieve him of his post if he has violated labor legislation, if he fails to carry out the commitments specified in the collective agreement or if he resorts to bureaucratic methods and red tape."

In 1979 alone 6,174 persons were punished administratively on demand of the trade unions. Among them were 146 executives who were dismissed for labor law violations and for disregard of workers' needs.

Article 18 prohibits the dismissal of any worker "without the consent of the factory workers or local branch trade union committee" and states, "any employee thus discharged shall be reinstated in the job".

The threat of dismissal is more than a club held over the heads of U.S. workers. It is regarded by employers generally as their chief instrument for intensifying exploitation of labor and achieving maximum profits. Some of the most bitter strike struggles center around this issue.

Article 36 guarantees equal pay for equal work and prohibits reductions in pay "for reasons of sex, age, race or nationality". Women in the U.S. receive little more than half (60 per cent) the pay for the same work as men. As for youth and minority workers, their super-exploitation is only too well known.

Management of Soviet plants and offices must provide the opportunity for workers to get professional training and improve their qualifications at no expenses to the workers. Article 83 states that the enterprise "shall organize individual and team training, and courses and other forms of industrial training at its own expense".

Articles 84 and 85 spell out the privileges those working and studying shall enjoy. They are "entitled to a shorter work week or shorter working hours per day, and shall

continue to draw their regular pay". They get paid leaves and other privileges. More than one-third of Soviet workers, taking advantage of such privileges, are engaged in studying.

The cost of professional training in the U.S. is far beyond the reach of most workers. And with rare exceptions (when certain specialized industries temporarily are hard pressed for highly qualified workers) the expense must be borne by the worker. Not only is there no special consideration to ease the double burden of work and study, but the worker in the U.S. has no guarantee of receiving a job in the higher qualification after he has completed study.

Or take the "right to healthy and safe working conditions". As all workers know, labor is not just work or even hard work. It very often involves danger. Without proper safeguards it can assume the hazards of war. The statistics of that "war" read like battle casualties. Few are more familiar with these "statistics" than American workers who often pay for their "high wages" with their lungs, limbs and lives.

There is no idyllic situation in Soviet production. And there are casualties and accidents. That is why those who do the most difficult and dangerous work receive the largest wages and the best in health protection, rest and recreation. Coal miners, for example, are among the highest paid in the USSR. They work only 6 hours a day, receive free milk and clothing. They get a 45-day annual vacation in beautiful union-run sanatoriums and rest homes and can retire at 50 years of age.

In the USSR there are strict laws against overtime. Overtime is regarded as a potential threat to the health of workers and is only permitted under special circumstances and on agreement with the trade union.

The U.S. Congress-created Occupational Safety and Health Administration has only 1,750 inspectors who can only check on 2 per cent of the five million workplaces under its jurisdiction.

The Soviet Trade Unions have an army of 400,000 inspectors covering every plant and enterprise in operation or construction, whose very word is law on safety and health.

Perhaps one of the most significant powers and responsibilities placed in the hands of the Soviet trade unions is contained in Article 96. It states: "The trade unions are in charge of state social insurance and run the sanatoriums, health protection establishments and rest homes under their management, as well as cultural, educational, tourist and sports facilities."

This simple statement of law sums up the significant role played by Soviet trade unions in Soviet society. The state social insurance fund managed by the unions was 37 billion roubles in 1981. The Soviet workers and their trade unions direct and have at their disposal: 94,000 clubs, Palaces of Culture, libraries and cinema halls; 440 sanatoriums and holiday hotels; 553 rest homes; 650 tourist bases and 6,200 factory weekend rest centers, 52,600 Young Pioneers' camps, accommodating 13 million children (in 1980 alone); 2,800 stadiums; 12,319 gymnasiums; 5,640 skiing bases and thousands of tennis courts.

Thus, industrial democracy Soviet style is expressed in directly involving millions of workers in determining production and protecting their manifold rights. It constitutes one of the basic elements of Soviet working democracy.

In the U.S. production process it is the Board of Directors which calls the tune. The production process is an antagonistic process. It constitutes one of the sharpest fields of class battle, with the workers fighting for their rights, above all the right to work, and for better working conditions. In the USSR the picture is entirely different if regarded without bias.

Oddly enough, our press, which is always arraigned against workers in strike struggles and which constantly agitates against the right to strike, clamors for such a right for ... Soviet workers. First, let it be clear, that nowhere, either in the Fundamentals of Labor Legislation or in any other laws, are Soviet workers denied the right to strike. Why then, don't they exercise that right? For the same reasons that I believe American workers would refrain from using that right if they exercised the powers in production and in society and government, and enjoyed the rights that Soviet workers have won.

CHAPTER VI

PEOPLE'S CONTROL—GRASSROOTS GUARDIANS

For more than six decades People's Control committees have served as the grassroots guardians of Soviet life. The U.S. has nothing even faintly resembling this vast army of People's Control offices. Consider its powers. People's Control has the right (more the obligation) to check and investigate industrial enterprises, collective and state farms, institutions, stores, hotels, transportation and communication services, all levels of government. In a word, every aspect of Soviet life. It has the power to audit and examine financial records, hold public hearings, call in for questioning leading officials, impound documents and materials, expose instances of corruption and breaches of law and serious shortcomings. But it is still not a government body.

The Soviet press is at the disposal of the People's Control to protect socialist property and people's rights from abuse, corruption, embezzlement, graft, mismanagement, waste, and bureaucracy.

Misdeeds are dealt with before public meetings of workers, farmers, at the places where they were committed. The chief objective of the People's Control is not punishment though it is meted out with the necessary severity. The main aim here as in all aspects of Soviet life is prevention. The goal is not sensational exploitation but correction. The objective is to bring everything to the attention of the people and make them truly the highest court in the land. In cases where public pressure is not enough, and the nature of the misdeeds demands severe action, the committees of People's Control have the right to impose penalties on officials and establishments and even to institute court proceedings against them. All decisions of the People's Control committees are published in the press and dis-

closed to the working collectives where the misdeeds were committed.

Perhaps Americans can grasp the character of the People's Control committees if they would imagine something along these lines: Multiply many times the number of Ralph Nader investigating committees ("Nader's raiders", as they are called). Add all community, trade union, and ad hoc groups organized to protect people's rights. Give them permanent power to act against misdeeds and those who commit them. Even then, the power and scope of People's Control would not be fully grasped.

The first thing that should be stressed is that People's Control is truly grassroots. A relative handful are full-time staff. The staff of the People's Control of the USSR (of the entire Union) consists of only 19 members. Naturally, it has office staff. With the exception of Moscow, which has 49, and Leningrad, which has 19, the regional and local committees have only 6 to 12 members each. More than half of the area and city committees have only one full timer (the others two). All the rest of the nearly 10 million guardians are non-paid people who remain on the job. They are elected by their co-workers at meetings in plants, collective and state farms, educational, cultural, and scientific institutions, schools and universities.

In composition as well as number of members the People's Control committees are truly representative: 4.5 million are workers; 1.7 million collective and state farmers; 3.2 million employees in service, offices and professions; 198,000 pensioners and housewives; 56,000 students. About 34-35 per cent are women (3.6 million). Nearly 37 per cent are members of the Communist Party and 63 per cent are non-members. There are 650,000 People's Control groups and 660,000 posts. These are the basic units established at all enterprises, institutions, collective and state farms and public organizations. In large plants and enterprises full People's Control committees are in operation. Half of the staff of the People's Control are Deputies.

At the top is the People's Control Committee of the USSR. It is directly linked with all industries, public services, planning and budget departments, scientific, cultural, health, military and administrative organs. At every

level of People's Control there is a special bureau for complaints and proposals.

The People's Control of the USSR is linked to the leading committees in the Union Republics, Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Regions. Under these are committees in cities and rural areas. These, in turn, are linked with committees in enterprises, organizations and farms.

People's Control committees in large plants and construction sites have departments which check on: fulfillment of plans and goals, implementation of new techniques, the quality of products, protection of socialist property, elimination of waste, improvement of management, fulfillment of goals in consumer production, investigation of complaints of working people and examination of the proposals submitted by them. People's Control committees in state and collective farms have departments which check on: harvesting of grain and other crops, rational use of the land and ensuring the protection of the environment, cattle raising and poultry farming, effective and careful use of mineral fertilizers, protection of socialist property and elimination of waste.

It was Lenin, the founder of the Soviet State, who first proposed the system of People's Control. Lenin wrote the draft proposal for workers' control. It was adopted and became law. The Commissariat of People's Control was established. Its main task was to protect from sabotage by the bourgeoisie enterprises, production in general, marketing, storage of produce and raw materials and the banks.

The Council of People's Commissars established the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with a network of local units. In the twenties, during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) when private enterprises were temporarily permitted to operate the task of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection was to prevent them from gaining key positions in the economy. With the victory of socialism the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection concentrated on the struggle against bureaucracy, mismanagement and waste.

In the 1960s, under conditions of advanced socialism when the dictatorship of the proletariat had developed into a state of the entire people, the role of the People's Control

committees became vastly extended and far more comprehensive. Their chief goal is to involve ever larger sections of the people in the administration of the affairs of state. The People's Control committees are one of the shoots of the communist future.

The People's Control committee in the giant Likhachev automobile complex, the General Motors of the USSR, for example, systematically conducts investigations and when there are grounds for suspecting violations of the law, "raids", that is unannounced, sudden investigations, examination of books, etc. for the purpose of improving the operation of the plants are carried out. The main objective is not sensationalism but elimination of obstacles to the most effective use of funds, resources and reserves. The activity of the People's Control Committee stimulates the initiative of the workers of the Likhachev complex. Thus, in the first quarter of 1979 workers offered 340 proposals for more efficient use of fuel, one-half of which were put into operation. It resulted in a saving of almost 260,000 roubles. Incidentally, there is not a single paid staff worker on the committee in the Likhachev complex.

The People's Control regards publicity as one of its chief forms of education as well as check-up. This public aspect of the People's Control was regarded as essential by Lenin who stated that the strength of the Soviet state lies in the consciousness of the masses who know all and can judge all. Lenin stressed the need for boldly revealing to the people the shortcomings as well as achievements. The aim, as he often pointed out, is not merely to reveal weaknesses and wrong-doing but to educate the masses on the basis of correcting shortcomings. This approach has long served as the basic guideline for the People's Control.

Walk through any plant, institution or the offices of any collective farm and you will come across the omnipresent "wall newspaper". Here, the life of the particular enterprise, its achievements and shortcomings, is laid bare. And names are named. Praise for some and criticism for others. The People's Control committee in the enterprise makes effective use of the "wall newspapers".

A particularly effective form of education and correction is the general meeting of the collective where the shortcom-

ings and violations are publicly discussed with leading members of management participating in the accounting. Are there cases where officials under investigation bring pressure to bear on members of the People's Control or attempt to use their authority to harass them? Yes, there are such cases and these have been reported in *Pravda* and the press generally. In Rostov, the director of an institute was removed from his post and expelled from the Communist Party for such conduct. In Frunze, the capital of the Kirghiz SSR, an official received a prison sentence for such actions.

At the same time, high standards of conduct are demanded of those who serve on the People's Control. They must be exemplary in their work and civic consciousness. That is why their candidatures are carefully considered at public meetings by people who know them.

In the course of more than six decades of dedicated service, the People's Control has gained high prestige. Annually more than 310,000 Soviet citizens apply to the People's Control for assistance. Every year it receives more than 280,000 proposals.

One of the most important tasks of the People's Control is to conduct a persistent struggle against bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is an occupational disease of any huge apparatus and as I observed (and experienced) it is one of the chief irritants of Soviet life. My own feeling is that in this respect, the People's Control and the Soviet state as a whole could and should conduct a more vigorous struggle. The important thing is that the Soviet people do have significant instruments in such struggles, one of the main being the People's Control.

The People's Control is a unique organization. It is one of the more vivid demonstrations of working democracy.

CHAPTER VII

PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES VERSUS PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS

The Soviets and our governing bodies reflect two different social systems. It is not easy to comprehend the ways of a society so basically different from our own. It takes an honest look. However, most Americans have not been given the opportunity to get that honest look. They have had to rely on the hardly unbiased accounts of the big business controlled media. Soviet reality has exploded many myths. Sputnik shattered the myth of Soviet "backwardness". However, the myth of Soviet "regimentation", as contrasted to our "genuine" democracy, clings.

To begin with, the very concept of democracy is abstracted from life by the defenders of the "free enterprise" status quo who have long sought shelter behind that discredited euphemism. They portray democracy as above classes, an eternal, static condition devoid of dialectical development.

Aside from the fact that such democracy has never existed anywhere in history, this is a useful concept for the powers-that-be in the U.S. It conceals their domination of the political and economic life of the country. It also enables them to present a distorted picture of the Soviet political system.

Social progress has always depended on classes in power and historical conditions. In the final analysis comparison based on deeds not words is the acid test for all political systems. It is in that light I wish to make some observations about the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Congress of the United States.

My fellow U.S. Moscow correspondents hardly took notice of the obvious differences in the class and national composition distinguishing the USSR Supreme Soviet from

our Congress. Yet that was the first thing that impressed me when I attended my first session of the Supreme Soviet in 1970 and later. The Soviet Deputies presented quite a contrast to our Senators and members of the House of Representatives in their class and national composition.

Assembled in the Kremlin amid the former splendors of the Czars were workers I had met at hydro-electric stations in Siberia and in the giant Likhachev automobile complex in Moscow, collective farmers I had talked to in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan and in the wheat harvesting of Ukraine. I had met them at work. They were indistinguishable from their fellow workers. Only the tale-telling insignias in their lapels or blouses identified them as Deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Now, many of them were sitting in the seats of supreme power.

Perhaps it's best to start with a comparison of the composition of the USSR and U.S. leading bodies. Here is the composition of the 1,500 Deputies (750 in each) of the two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and Soviet of Nationalities, making up the USSR Supreme Soviet (in July 1979). Men—67.5 per cent, women 32.5, youth 21.1 (aged 21-30), workers 34.8 per cent, collective farmers 16.3 per cent (together workers and farmers make up 51 per cent), scientific and cultural workers 9 per cent (30.4 per cent of the Deputies have scientific degrees). The Deputies represent 61 nationalities.

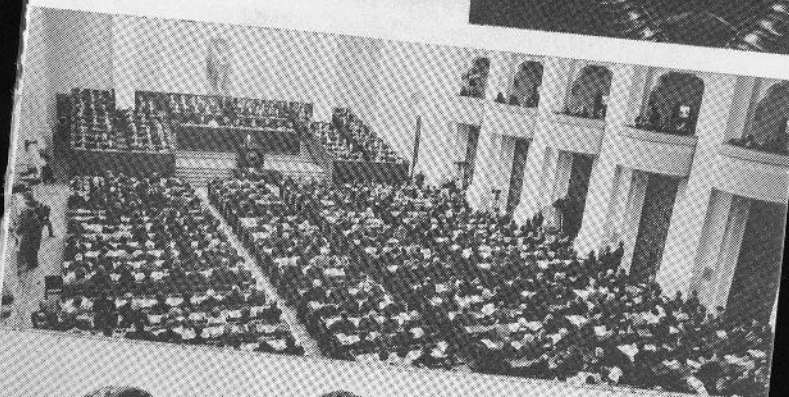
Here is the breakdown for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Senate: 100 members. Women—2; workers—0, lawyers—57 (mostly linked with corporations); businessmen—23; Blacks—0; Hispanics—0; Orientals—3.

House of Representatives: 435 members. Women—19; workers—6; lawyers—186; businessmen and bankers—117; doctors—3; Blacks—17; Hispanics—5; Orientals—2.

A United Press story reported in the *San Francisco Examiner* (August 20, 1979) stated: "Altogether, the Senate has at least 24 and possibly as many as 40 millionaires." In other words, from 24 to 40 per cent are from the upper income bracket. Even the patrician Roman Senate could not compare with the U.S. Senate, known as the "millionaires' club".

The Report by General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Leonid Brezhnev, who was Chairman of the Constitution Commission, on the draft of the new USSR Constitution and the results of its nationwide discussion was unanimously approved by Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet.





Member of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Chairman of the Soviet Women's Committee, Hero of the Soviet Union Valentina Nikolayeva-Tereshkova, the world's first woman cosmonaut (left), during an interval between sittings of the Supreme Soviet.

Deputies from Tajikistan at the 3rd Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, in June 1980.



Deputies to the 4th Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet (October 1980) getting records of the session.

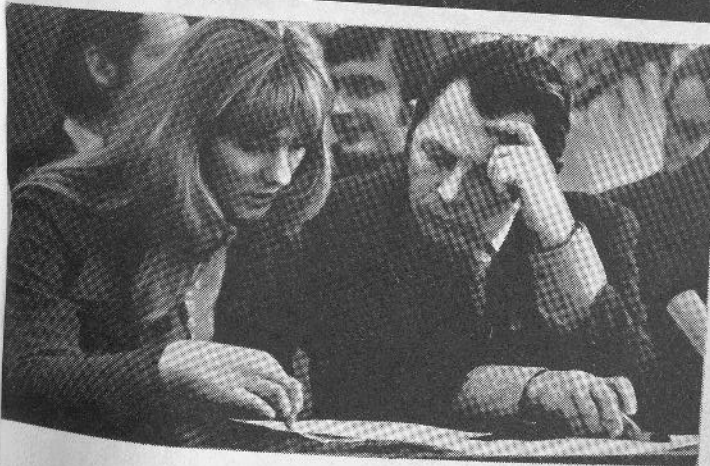
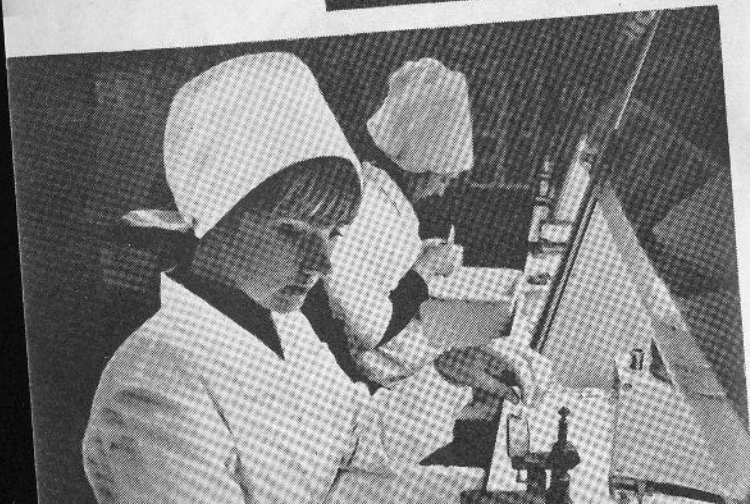
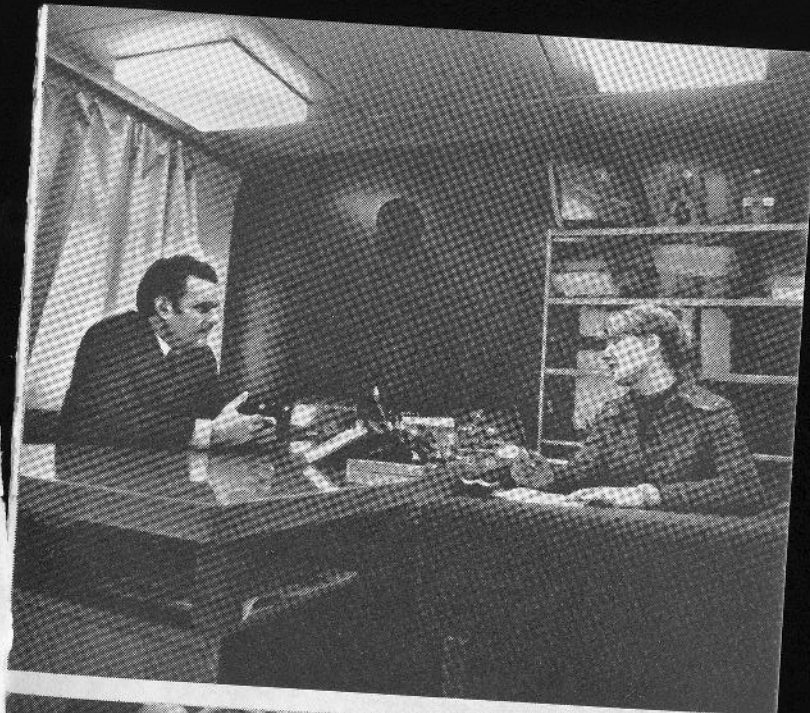
Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions Stepan Shalayev delivers a report at the 17th Congress of the Trade Unions of the USSR on March 16, 1982.

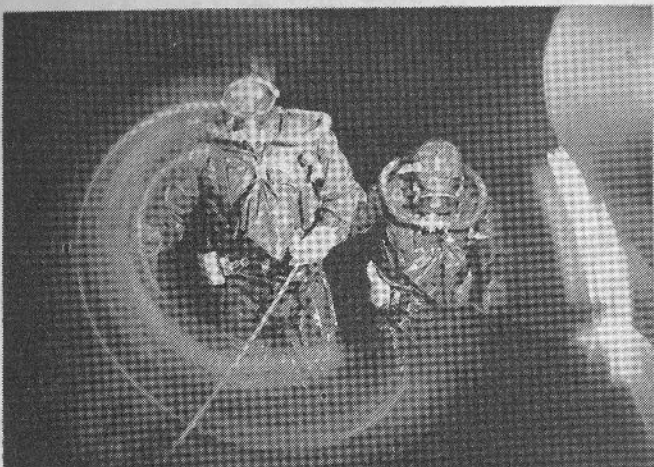


Deputy to the USSR
Supreme Soviet
Aldona Kavalauskaite,
an assembler from the
Ekranas Plant in the
Lithuanian town of
Panevezys, at a section
where electronic and
optical systems are
assembled.

●
Aldona Kavalauskaite
talks with the manager
of the *Ekranas* Plant,
Vincetas Navickas, a
Deputy to the
Supreme Soviet of the
Lithuanian SSR.

●
At a plant meeting.





Donetsk, Ukraine.
These public
inspectors of the mine
rescue service are
members of a miners'
team headed by
Anatoly Asyutchenko.

●
Members of this team
in the mine.

●
Team leader Anatoly
Asyutchenko, a
Deputy to the City
Soviet.



It is more difficult to get as precise a breakdown in the House since there is resistance to giving out such information. Nevertheless, *The New York Times* (January 4, 1976) was able to report "partial" success. It stated: "Amid increasing pressure from both inside and 'outside' of Congress for fuller disclosure of financial holdings, partial records show that the House of Representatives has at least 22 millionaires among its 435 members and possibly more." It notes that there are "many others with considerable wealth".

In all fairness there is a difference between Soviet Deputies and U.S. Senators and Congressmen.

The Soviets created a new type of "politician" totally unfamiliar in the West, a non-professional politician.

It is a cardinal principle written into the 1977 Soviet Constitution. Article 104 (Chapter 14) states: "Deputies shall exercise their powers without discontinuing their regular employment or duties."

This qualitative change in the relationship between government and people, this direct and permanent tie between them has been maintained and deepened through more than six decades of Soviet rule. It was tested and strengthened in war and peace. It was perfected in the historic fulfillment of the majestic goals of *ten five-year plans*.

"During sessions of the Soviets and so as to exercise their deputy's powers in cases stipulated by law, Deputies shall be released from their employment or duties with retention of their *average earnings at their permanent place of work*." (My emphasis, *M.D.*)

What characteristics do Soviet Deputies have in common?

1—In most I met the chief force motivating their acceptance of the heavy duties of their *unpaid* public service is a sincere desire to make life better for the Soviet people. Six decades of collective living bred by collective ownership of and responsibility for the means of production and national resources, has made service for the common good one of the chief sources of happiness. This is to Soviet life what the profit motive is to "free enterprise" society.

2—By combining executive with legislative functions, by

being *responsible* for *implementing* the decisions they make, Soviet Deputies have gone a long way toward bridging the age-old gap between words and deeds. This I learned particularly in observing the work of the standing commissions of the Supreme Soviet where 75 per cent of the Deputies do their main work. It is here especially that they master the art of scientific investigation, verification of decisions and the all-important task of check-up.

3—As a result of the very nature of their non-professional status, Soviet Deputies are truly people's representatives. On the other hand, the separation from the people which starts with their very position in society and is augmented by their professional politician status, makes it difficult indeed for our Senators and Congress persons to be anything but the professional politicians they are.

Not all Soviet Deputies equally reflect these characteristics. I met some who still cling to the old self-seeking values. I have come across careerists. But these are the exception rather than the rule among Deputies.

With every advance by Soviet society *more* is demanded of the Soviets and Deputies. The struggle to improve their functioning is a constant one. Resolutions of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which I read carefully, are proof of this.

A special law on the status of Deputies to the Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the USSR was adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on September 20, 1972. In connection with the adoption of a new Constitution of the USSR in 1977, the law on the status of Deputies was amended on April 19, 1979, and endorsed as "The USSR Law on the Status of People's Deputies in the USSR". The 36 articles of the law spell out in detail the responsibilities and the rights of Deputies. There is nothing comparable in respect to U.S. representatives. Neither the U.S. Constitution nor any special law details the *duties* of members of Congress. Nor, to my knowledge, has any state legislature or City Council done so in respect to its members. Once elected the representative is "on his own". Pledges made during election campaigns are hardly considered binding. On the contrary. It is the yawning gap

between promises and performance that is largely responsible for the *crisis of confidence* affecting elected officials on all levels.

Article 7 of the Law ("Mandates of the Electorate") states that a Deputy must "work for the fulfillment of the mandates of the electorate, check their implementation by the enterprises, establishments and organizations, and see to it that these mandates be put into life. The appropriate Soviets of People's Deputies shall examine electors' mandates, take them into account in drafting economic and social development plans and in drawing up the budget, *organize implementation of the mandates*, and inform citizens about it". (My emphasis, M.D.)

I witnessed this process. A schedule of priorities for carrying out mandates is elaborated and listed so that the people can see when their mandates will be put into life.

I would walk by a construction site and read: *This department store is being built in accordance with the mandate of the voters of such and such a district*. Thus, Soviet citizens have the best proof of all that their mandates are being carried out: *living proof*.

Soviet Deputies have the willing support of the Soviet Government and Soviet society. All are guided by the common aim of Soviet society, the basic law of that socialist society: to provide to the maximum for the material and spiritual needs of the people. Thus, Article 6 states, it is the duty of a Deputy to maintain contact with the electorate, with the collectives of working people and public organizations which nominated him as well as other enterprises, government and public organizations in his district. A Deputy is responsible to the electorate and accountable to them.

Article 107 of the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR obliges Deputies to "report on their work and on that of the Soviet to their constituents, and to the work collectives and public organizations that nominated them". I attended such meetings in the Frunze district of Moscow where I lived and noted the frankness with which my neighbors made their critical remarks and lodged their complaints. There is no doubt that Deputies have to report back on their work.

The U.S. Constitution makes no mention of the duty of any elected official to report back to the electorate.

Article 107 of the USSR Constitution states: "Deputies who have not justified the confidence of their constituents may be recalled at any time by decision of a majority of the electors."

In the past two decades 8,231 of a total of nearly 20,000,000 Deputies have been recalled, including 8,096 Deputies to local Soviets, 98 Deputies to the Supreme Soviets of Union and Autonomous Republics and 12 Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

The picture in the United States is quite different. There is hardly anything more complicated than the procedure of recall of an elected official who has failed to fulfill his election promises or his duties. It is encumbered by such red tape that it is not often utilized. Moreover, since election laws are a matter of each particular state in the United States these laws are different in different states and are made generally by lawyers who represent the interests of financial or political leaders in this or that part of the country.

As far as the Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet and to local Soviets are concerned, their regular replacement is immutable law. As I have already written, 56.1 per cent of the Deputies to the Supreme Soviet elected in 1979 were newly-elected Deputies. This does not mean that the Deputies of the previous convocation have not fulfilled their duties well. This is done to get the greatest possible number of dedicated and capable people involved in the administration of the affairs of state.

In the U.S. an elected official is not bound to account to his constituents. Nor is he obligated to maintain regular contacts with them. Occasionally, there have appeared devoted and conscientious representatives, like Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York, who took it upon themselves to meet regularly with their constituents, listen to their problems and try to help resolve them. I worked closely with the late Congressman Marcantonio for a number of years and I know how beloved he was because of his concern for the needs of the people. But the Marcantonios, unfortunately, are all too rare in the U.S.

In the Soviet Union, deputies like Marcantonio are the rule, not the exception. And they can do much more for their constituents than the hard-working New York Congressman because unlike Marcantonio they do not have to contend with an unsympathetic Congress and White House. Nor do they have to confront the overwhelming pressure of big business.

In the U.S. contact between representatives and the constituents generally takes place from elections to elections. In the USSR, contact between Deputies and electors begins immediately after elections. In countless industrial plants, steel, auto, machine-tool complexes and dozens of collective and state farms I visited in the 14 Republics I came upon the same notice: "Ivan A. Ivanov or Irina B. Smirnova, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet, will receive constituents on the 16th and 30th of each month from 12 noon." These reception days are advertised over the plant radio and in the newspaper. In between, the Deputy who is seen every day in the plant where he or she works, is approached by fellow workers. Then, too, Deputies carry on extensive correspondence with their constituents. During their regular meetings with their constituents Deputies report on their work and the activity of the Soviet. It is here, particularly, that they inform their constituents on the progress of their mandates and often receive new ones.

When I attended such meetings I mentally compared them with the meetings between Marcantonio and his constituents. Marcantonio was confronted with problems arising from the ills of a very sick society: sons of poor ghetto parents who got caught up in crime and drug addiction; people who were threatened with eviction because the welfare office was still investigating their cases (this was in the aftermath of the Great Depression).

Housing needs also figure highly in the problems raised before Soviet Deputies. The problems usually have to do with special needs (a doctor's letter stating that such need exists is usually sufficient) or complaints that the order in receiving housing (it is listed publicly) is not being properly followed. The Deputy, in such cases, cuts through red tape and gets the matter attended to.

Matters are also raised of a more public character. For example, at the meeting I attended in the Frunze district an elderly woman insisted that a take-away food shop would be more useful than the existing beer parlor. She complained that the latter was not a particularly good influence in the neighborhood since it was the hangout for shiftless characters. And lo and behold! One day I walked by and sure enough there was a food shop in place of the beer parlor! There is a constant need for more modern food and retail stores and especially service establishments. Thus many of the mandates are for more of these facilities.

How are all these mandates fulfilled? I raised this question with Deputies on all levels. And all gave me the same answer. A priority list is worked out in accordance with the five-year plan (everything is in accordance with it) and the needs of the constituents of various districts. Obviously, it is impossible to carry out all the mandates at the same time. This is understood generally. Thus the order of priorities is worked out. It is here that often there are sharp discussions with Deputies naturally pressing for their particular mandates. However, the give and take is not of the character assumed in the U.S. where class conflicts predominate. Brought up in the spirit of collectivity and high civic consciousness, the Deputies do not lose sight of the general welfare. Moreover, Soviet citizens know (in housing, for example) that their needs will be met, if not now, certainly in the near future. It is that knowledge backed up by years of results and steady progress that is the basic difference in the two societies in respect to problems.

The difference between Soviet Deputies and our representatives lies not only in their class composition and their ties with the people. It above all lies in this: Soviet society is geared to work for the people. Ours primarily is guided by the interests of big business. Thus Soviet Deputies can achieve real results in their work. Our representatives can't without an all-out struggle. Few indeed are willing to engage in such a struggle.

The expenses permitted Soviet Deputies are modest indeed and are not only prescribed by law. They are strictly enforced. Soviet law provides for the reimbursement of expenses of Deputies to the Supreme Soviet in the amount

of 200 roubles a month (about \$300) in performance of duties. This is largely for mailing, telegrams and other expenses. During sessions of the Supreme Soviet and meetings of the commissions, as well as on other occasions, a Deputy is given an allowance of 15 roubles a day including payment for hotel accommodation. A Deputy is entitled to a free use of public transport.

Deputies pay the same taxes on their wages or salaries as do all Soviet citizens. They receive no special pensions. Nor do they reap rich benefits out of or after office.

The picture is quite different in respect to our Senators and Congress persons (and politicians generally). Government service is lucrative in the U.S. In December 1980 U.S. Congress decided to increase the salaries of its members once again. Now they receive \$70,900 a year and additional considerable sums to cover the maintenance of their offices in Washington and in their constituencies and other expenses in performance of their duties.

Thus, in composition, in their non-professional status, in their ties with the people and in their modest remuneration limited to necessary expenses, Soviet Deputies indeed represent a new type of political leader. They provide a stark, refreshing and democratic contrast to the big business professional politicians who dominate our Congress.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO MANAGEMENT MODELS

Our Moscow correspondents charge the Supreme Soviet with being a "rubber stamp" because it only meets twice a year for four- or five-day sessions. They completely ignore the work of the standing commissions of the Supreme Soviet. It is in these commissions which function throughout the year that the main preparatory and checking work of the Supreme Soviet is done. Neither do our Moscow correspondents take the trouble to examine the composition of the commissions, how they discuss and yes, debate issues, how they *arrive at decisions and report to the Supreme Soviet and, above all, how they implement and check up on decisions.*

I examined the work of the Planning and Budget Commission of the Soviet of Nationalities and met with Nikolai I. Maslennikov, its chairman. Maslennikov is also Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation and Chairman of that Republic's State Planning Committee. (We have no governmental body charged with the responsibility of *planning* the economy as well as the cultural, educational, health, recreational and other social needs of the country).

Because of the comprehensive nature of its work, this important Commission of the Soviet of Nationalities has 45 members. All the others number 35. The independent character of this, and all commissions, is strictly maintained. Should any member of any commission become a member of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet or the USSR government official, he or she is automatically released from the commission and replaced.

One of the main tasks of the Planning and Budget Commission is to guide the complex process of working out

and implementing the all-inclusive, long-range plans.

When I met with Maslennikov and other members of the USSR Supreme Soviet in June 1979 the Commission was concentrating on winding up the 10th Five-Year Plan. It was focussing its attention on 1980, the last year of that plan, and laying the groundwork for the 11th Five-Year Plan (1981-1985) and for the period ending in 1990.

I pointed out to Maslennikov and other members of the Supreme Soviet that most Americans find it hard to understand how his Commission and the Supreme Soviet can elaborate a plan embracing tens of thousands of enterprises. I told them: "In our country even planning for one enterprise is quite a feat. The Board of Directors of General Motors, for example, would regard any effort by Congress to plan for General Motors a violation of the sacred rights of private property." My hosts smiled in understanding. "The results of ten Five-Year Plans speak for themselves," Maslennikov noted. "Soviet national income is 68 times higher than in 1928, the start of the First Five-Year Plan. Industrial production increased 128 times. Soviet industrial output is 80 per cent of that of the U.S. During the 9th Five-Year Plan 11 million apartments were constructed and distributed. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan two million apartments a year were built. All this was possible only thanks to clear-cut and well-substantiated planning."

The five-year plan is one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century. Planning proceeds simultaneously at the grassroots and at the top level. And here as well as in other aspects of the Soviet way of life one can see democratic centralism in action, which combines central leadership with local initiative and creative activity, as provided for by Article 3 of the USSR Constitution.

"The economy of the USSR," says Article 16 of the Constitution, "is an integral economic complex comprising all the elements of social production, distribution, and exchange on its territory."

The economy is managed on the basis of state plans for economic and social development, with due account of the sectoral and territorial principles, and by combining centra-

lized direction with the managerial independence and initiative of individual and amalgamated enterprises and other organizations, for which active use is made of management accounting, profit, cost, and other economic levers and incentives.

The general perspectives of the development of Soviet society is determined by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which is being guided by the interests of the entire people. The CPSU congresses which, as a rule, are held every five years draw up guidelines for the country's economic development, which are published beforehand and are discussed nationwide.

Upon endorsement of these guidelines by the Party congress five-year plans and a plan for the current year are drawn up on the basis of the guidelines.

Having received targets from the state each enterprise works out with the active participation of the trade unions its yearly and five-year plans. These are sent to the corresponding ministries. On the basis of these estimates the ministries draft their plans and dispatch them to the State Planning Committee. It draws up one draft plan. It is still a draft for discussion and amendment.

Months ahead it is submitted by the Council of Ministers to all Deputies for study. It only becomes the plan when the USSR Supreme Soviet discusses it and adopts it. Then it is not only a plan but a law, a law which the Soviet people are guided by and obligated to fulfill.

But before the plan comes up before the USSR Supreme Soviet, it is thoroughly discussed and debated by the Planning and Budget Commission. The Commission not only relies on the expertise and knowledge of its 45 members, it summons specialists from the USSR Academy of Sciences, leading economists, workers who have distinguished themselves, representatives from trade union and other public organizations. It should be remembered that the 45 members of the Commission themselves represent (and remain in contact with) all sections of the population.

The Planning and Budget Commission calls before it representatives of the 15 Republics to discuss the plan and budget. It sets up sub-committees to dig deeply into all the problems involved. The plan is considered by 16 sub-

committees and 26 Standing Commissions (in the two Chambers of the Supreme Soviet).

Most important of all—the draft plan is published in all the newspapers in millions of copies. It is widely discussed for months. Numerous proposals and amendments must be considered. They are carefully compiled and submitted to the Planning and Budget Commission.

It is in these numerous discussions and debates where the disagreements arise and are resolved. Then, during the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the commissions submit their conclusions concerning the plan and budget, and chairmen of the commissions also report. As a rule, the plan and budget are adopted with amendments proposed by the commissions.

But the work of the Planning and Budget Commission (and of all the commissions) is hardly completed with the adoption of the plan. The main work only begins. As executive (and not only legislative) bodies, the commissions must check up on the implementation of the plan by respective ministries and enterprises. Before a head of a particular ministry or plant is summoned before a commission to account, he or she is informed well ahead of the date. In preparation for that meeting, the commission makes its own study of the situation in the ministry or plant. It does not merely rely on reports or statistics. It dispatches Deputies to investigate on the spot and to report back to the commission.

By law Deputies must be received and permitted to examine all records. This procedure is known to the heads of the ministry or plant to be questioned. The hearings before the commissions are very businesslike, frank and often quite sharp.

Accountability is the key word. The plan has been democratically discussed and adopted and now it must be carried out by all. That is the Soviet style of work. Executives of departments and institutions, heads of enterprises—all are obliged by law to appear before the commissions when summoned to account.

All commission meetings, as well as sessions of the USSR Supreme Soviet, are public and their deliberations, reports, discussions and interrogations are reported by

the press media. Thus, in essence, heads of huge plants account to the entire Soviet public. It is a public check-up. And it is done regularly as I observed.

Often, as I listened, I tried to imagine the chairman of the Board of Directors of U.S. Steel, Standard Oil or General Foods, the monopoly that determines how much and what we eat, being held to account for their price gouging. As we know to our sorrow, efforts to set up even a toothless consumers' committee were defeated in Congress as "government interference" in private affairs.

The monopolies are a law unto themselves. Occasionally, the President publicly gives them a slap on the wrist (it is called "jawboning") when their greed for profits becomes a bit too raw. The monopolists, who well understand the "game", just continue doing what they were doing.

Both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have standing and temporary investigating committees. In fact, many of the 25 Senate and 35 House committees conduct periodic investigations. Their activity is to a large extent motivated by political and special interests considerations. Investigations, properly timed and exploited, have paved the way to higher office for many a political demagogue. Riding high on the wave of the witchhunting red-baiting McCarthy hysteria during the early 1950s, Richard Nixon as a leading member of the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities capitalized on the public hearings to climb to power over the broken bodies and ruined reputations of democratic-minded Americans. The unprincipled Nixon crucified Alger Hiss who had made the unfortunate mistake of once having been associated with liberals and progressives.

Congress also has an agency, the General Accounting Office, which is supposed to serve as the government watchdog over the multi-billion dollar expenditures passing through thousands of hands in the huge bureaucratic federal apparatus. The GAO is almost if not entirely devoid of labor representation. It is entirely composed of a paid staff—government appointees and employees. Moreover, the GAO as a creature of politics is restrained from fully exercising its powers. Occasionally, it exposes corruption when it gets out of hand. But corruption is so much part of

life in free-enterprise U.S. that many Americans, unfortunately, have come to regard it as an inevitable vice. The exposure rarely results in anything but cosmetic changes.

The public check-up conducted by the commissions and the Supreme Soviet is one of the main features distinguishing Soviet working democracy from U.S. talking democracy. It is this check-up which constantly narrows and bridges the gap between word and deed, plan and implementation. And it is this link *between promise and performance* that is the basis for the *confidence Soviet people have in their government, in their Supreme Soviet and in their Deputies*.

I think American readers would be interested to know that certain kind of people who play an extremely influential role in our Congress are conspicuous by their absence in the Supreme Soviet. I am referring to the *lobbyists*.

Big business in the U.S. takes no chances. It not only stacks the political deck with its two major parties, it sets up a vast unofficial system to guarantee that its interests are fully protected. The system of lobbies is indeed a "major industry". *Who Runs Congress*, a study conducted under the direction of Ralph Nader, the well-known consumer advocate, points out: "There are currently five thousand or more full-time lobbyists in Washington—ten for each member of Congress—and the lobbying industry continues to grow. One estimate is that eight of every ten of the nation's biggest corporations already have representatives in Washington and each year a dozen new companies set up permanent beachheads in the Capitol." (Pages 30-31, Bantam Books, published September 1972.)

The book exposes the powerful forces behind the huge military budget and the nuclear arms race. It lists as one of the key lobbies "the Military Armaments Lobby", which is the instrument of what President Eisenhower famously characterized as the "military industrial complex".

Then there are the so-called advisory committees that act as a sort of invisible government. The *San Francisco Examiner* (July 6, 1975) points out: "Federal decisions that touch nearly every American are frequently designed by secretive 'advisory committees' that form a sort of shadow government through their widespread influence over the bureaucracy."

Some students of government in the West not only justify government by non-elected decision-makers. They maintain that in the complex world of today, policy must be placed in the hands of qualified "experts".

No wonder then that the proponents of elitist rule in the West sneer at the non-elitist Soviet Deputies who perform their public service while fulfilling their responsibilities on their jobs. With their narrow concept of "expertise" they cannot see the forest for the trees. They fail to grasp that no single specialist can equal in knowledge the combined collective experience of specialists and non-specialists. They do not understand *expertise is built into* the very character of the Supreme Soviet (and Soviets on all levels).

Indeed, the expertise is first of all built into the composition of the commissions. Deputies are largely assigned in accordance with their specialities. Moreover, the representative character of the 1,500 Deputies, 1,140 of whom serve on the commissions, provides the reservoir of experts in all fields.

The apparatus of the Supreme Soviet is at the disposal of all Deputies to provide them with the additional information they need for their work. Moreover, the commissions and Deputies individually, can and do draw on the specialized knowledge of experts in the USSR Academy of Sciences, in the universities, research institutions, libraries, etc. These do not act as a "shadow" government. They operate in the open and their expert opinion is critically evaluated and utilized with due acknowledgement and appreciation.

The Soviets spare no effort to involve the maximum number of people in the affairs of government. As I noted earlier, half the Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet and to all Soviets are newly elected. In addition to the two million Deputies in the 50,000 Soviets on all levels, it is estimated that another 30 million people are actively involved in government affairs in one form or another on a voluntary basis. This is one of the most democratic features of the Soviets. And it is thanks to the vast preparatory work done with the participation of these activists that sessions of the Soviets on all levels are being held so efficiently. The session of the Supreme Soviet in December

1979 met for only three days in which it considered and acted upon: the plan and budget for the last year of the Tenth Five-Year Plan; a check-up on how the plan and the budget were fulfilled in 1978; legislation on the People's Control; legislation on the Supreme Court, the bar, the procurator (Attorney General) of the USSR; and legislation on arbitration.

The reports and discussion on the plan and budget for 1980 were quite sharp and openly critical. Leonid Brezhnev, for example, in his report to the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that preceded the session of the Supreme Soviet, bluntly criticized a number of Ministries which failed to meet their goals, among them transport, construction, food, and agriculture.

Brezhnev named names and fixed responsibilities on the heads of the lagging industries and plants. His deep-going concrete analysis of the entire economy, its progress and its shortcomings, his frank fixing of responsibilities on heads of industries have no comparison in our political life.

Similar hard-hitting reports were made to the USSR Supreme Soviet by other leading officials. The discussion that followed dealt particularly concretely with the shortcomings and achievements in the Republics and major industries and with what must be done to guarantee the fulfillment of the 1980 plan. The Supreme Soviet was able to move with dispatch on all these vital points because, as I pointed out, the basic work had already been done by the 75 per cent of the Deputies in the commissions during the two months prior to the Supreme Soviet session.

The first session of the U.S. 96th Congress was much longer and it certainly discussed and debated much more than the Supreme Soviet. What did it all add up to? Though the U.S. was in the grips of an energy crisis which had been discussed for seven years, Congress still did not come up with any program. President Carter appointed Alfred Kahn as his "inflation fighter". Kahn fought a "losing fight" and Congress continued to debate the critical situation as prices continued to mount.

However, on one issue, our Congress moved with dispatch. It voted to bail out the failing Chrysler Corporation and gave it big financial support.

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Our Moscow correspondents charge the Supreme Soviet with being a "rubber stamp" because it usually arrives at unanimous decision. One would think that the hallmark of democracy is disagreement, division, dissension.

In his excellent booklet, *Soviet Parliament: How It Works*, Alexei Shytikov, Chairman of the Soviet of the Union and of the Parliamentary Group of the USSR, states: "The desire to reach unanimity is a significant feature distinguishing fundamentally socialist democracy from bourgeois democracy but this does not imply that unanimity is attained automatically." If our Moscow correspondents took the trouble to examine the work of the commissions particularly (and the work of the Soviets generally) they would have discovered this.

But why is there not only the desire but the ability to reach unanimity in the Supreme Soviet?

Take, for example, such a basic issue as the proper use of natural resources. The Soviet Union also faces serious problems in this respect. There are differences of opinion and these often explode into public debate.

I was in the USSR during the great debate around Lake Baikal which was widely reported and misinterpreted by our press. There were some in Soviet managerial circles, who in their desire to exploit the rich resources around Baikal, exhibited narrow, parochial outlooks. The press, and particularly *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, took them to task. Incidentally, a very popular film *By the Lake* was made on the subject.

It was an issue around which there were disagreements and it was resolved on the basis of its merits. Baikal's purity was preserved and the surrounding natural resources protected.

The picture is quite different in our big business dominated society. Nothing demonstrates this more than the "energy crisis". Here is how the *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle* (July 22, 1979) places the price Americans may have to "pay" for more energy: "Besides high prices at the gas pumps, Americans may have to accept higher air

and water pollution, the loss of agricultural lands and water..." And to hit home the cost it stresses: "By far the highest price of accelerated coal production will be paid in human lives. The OTA (Office of Technology Assessments) estimates that coal worker fatalities will increase by up to 67 per cent over the next 20 years reaching a high of 371 each year..." What kind of national unity can one expect based upon an outlook which anticipates such battle casualties among coal miners and increased pollution of the water we drink and the air we breathe?

There is no such cavalier attitude toward human lives in the Soviet Union. Quite the contrary, as I observed when I went down into the bowels of the mines of Donbas in Makeyevka, Ukraine. More than 1,350 scientific and research workers (600 of them, scientists) concentrate on overcoming mining hazards. Miners are supported by the Miners Emergency Rescue headquarters consisting of an army of 2,000 highly trained rescue workers and 120 doctors. Incidentally, no category of Soviet workers can complain of any lack of concern for their needs. This is the reality upon which the unanimity our Moscow correspondents disparage is based.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN PROBLEMS CEASE TO BE PROBLEMS

The character of the discussion in the USSR Supreme Soviet presents a stark contrast to that of our Congress. The basic reason for the contrast in both areas is: *problems which have reached critical proportions in our society have ceased to be problems in Soviet life.*

The problems did not disappear overnight. For example, though the revolution took place in 1917, it was not until 1930 that unemployment was done away with. Most Soviet citizens only know about the tragedy of joblessness from books, newsreels or hearsay.

How then can the Supreme Soviet "*debate*" this problem? Unemployment is very much an issue in U.S. life and in Congress. Our army of unemployed now numbers 9 million and is continuing to grow. Plants are closed. Factories are at a standstill, abandoned settlements face the prospect of becoming ghost towns. U.S. Congress is not doing much about this life and death problem.

When one speaks about the USSR, it is not enough to say that it has long done away with unemployment. The right to work in the Soviet Union is not only guaranteed, it is extended in the Soviet Constitution adopted in 1977 to include the right of citizens of the USSR to choose their trade or profession, type of job and work in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, training and education (Article 40).

Or take inflation. Inflation is not on the Supreme Soviet's agenda. Retail prices as a whole have not changed since 1967. A few increases did take place but these were in non-essential products or services such as liquors, caviar, furs, taxi fares. Basic foodstuffs such as meat, bread, milk have long been kept at the same prices by government

subsidies. Rents which only take three per cent of a Soviet family's income have remained the same. In the U.S. the landlords take one-third to forty and often as high as fifty per cent of a family's income.

Public utilities—electricity, gas, telephone—have not risen in the USSR since 1948. The same low cost of 16 kopecks per person (about 24 cents) is charged for gas and two and a half roubles a month for telephone (about \$3.75). The fare for the Metro remains the same as it was in 1935—five kopecks (7 cents).

The average utility bill in the U.S. is around \$50 a month, four times the average rent paid by Soviet citizens. And the limit has hardly been reached in the U.S.

I waited in vain to hear outcries in the USSR Supreme Soviet on another issue that so disturbs Americans—taxes. I listened attentively to the report by the Chairman of the Planning and Budget Commission on the All-Union budget. That dreaded word, taxes, was barely mentioned. I waited for some "bold" Deputy to raise the issue from the floor. But in vain. ("Rubber stamps", our Moscow correspondents would charge.)

There was silence on this question because it, too, has long ceased to be an issue in Soviet life. Only 7-8 per cent of the Soviet budget comes from taxes, primarily on income. Moreover, unlike in our country the trend is toward steadily decreasing taxes with the ultimate objective of eliminating them altogether when the Soviet economy can provide adequately without them. *More than 90 per cent of the Soviet budget comes from a share of the profits of enterprises and industries.* Almost 90 per cent of our 1978-79 federal budget came from taxes either in the form of a direct or indirect levy on income. The bulk of this is paid by the working people.

Or take the issue of housing. By the same standard of debating our Congress again wins hands down over the USSR Supreme Soviet. But judging by results?

As never before Americans are learning the meaning of the word *landlord*. Rents are sky-rocketing and the sky is no longer the limit. The American dream of a home of one's own (average cost more than \$50,000 and in California it is \$90,000-100,000) has become a nightmare.

Yet federal housing construction for low-income families has been virtually brought to a halt.

Congress has failed to avert the housing crisis it is now "studying".

And the USSR Supreme Soviet? It "studied" less but did far more than our Congress. By decision of the Soviets an average of over 2,000,000 apartments were built annually for many years (55 million in the past 25 years).

This has never been accomplished by any other society in the history of mankind and no country in the West can look forward to such a future.

For months in 1979 Congress "debated" the energy crisis while scarcities were created and manipulated by the oil barons and prices zoomed. A Democratic President presented a six-point "energy" program to an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress. The President's program represented a complete capitulation to the oil monopolies.

Our Moscow correspondents are certainly familiar with the manipulation of Congressional "debate" in Congress by powerful financial interests. No such equivalents can be found in the USSR.

Let me deal with one more example of the differences in meeting the energy problem. In the winter of 1977 the American people faced a particularly sharp fuel crisis. The unusually severe winter hit hard at millions of homes, especially in the Midwest. There was a serious shortage of oil in states like Ohio. And so Governor Rhodes of Ohio embarked on an emergency mission to the state of Texas, to negotiate (plead, is more like it) with the oil barons of that oil-rich state who also control its huge natural gas deposits.

The negotiations were conducted as if they were between two foreign powers. And the "foreign power" representing the Texas energy interests fully realized they had Ohio over a barrel (an oil barrel!). In the best tradition of free enterprise they demanded an exorbitant price. Ohio could not pay that price and thus had to forego Texas oil and gas.

And what did Governor Rhodes have to say about the failure of his "mission"? In an interview on television he did not in the least appear incensed at the profiteering

squeeze put on desperate Ohio. On the contrary, the Governor was very "understanding" of the Texas usurers! As a "practical" businessman himself, Rhodes pointed out that it was to be expected that the Texas oil men would make every effort to get the best price for their commodity given the existing relationship between supply and demand. After all, the holy of holies of free enterprise is the right to a maximum profit.

I traveled widely throughout Siberia, the Far North, Far East, and the Turkmen Republic where much of Soviet fuel and energy sources lie buried in the ground. In Siberia and Far North it is literally buried under deep layers of frozen ground. In Turkmenia it is entrapped in deserts.

The expense involved in prospecting for and extracting, not to speak of transporting the oil and natural gas many thousands of miles, is indeed considerable. Every budget discussion I listened to in the Supreme Soviet took this immense expense into account and was focussed on concrete plans for the investment of huge sums of capital and the mobilization of labor to find and produce the vital energy necessary to make the wheels of booming Soviet industries turn and to heat the homes of the Soviet people at prices that would make Americans green with envy.

The development of energy sources is and always has been an integral part of the five-year plans. The vast expansion in the production of oil, natural gas and coal, making the Soviet Union today one of the world's leaders in energy output, can be traced through the history of 11 five-year plans, with the latest one covering the 1981-85 period and being discussed in the context of the long-range plan for the period up to 1990.

The USSR today leads the world in output of oil and coal and is second in the production of electric power and gas.

Thus the Soviet people know nothing of the problems of unemployment and the housing crisis. They know nothing of energy and currency crises, or any other similar misfortunes. The Soviet people are spared these "blessings" of free enterprise. Thus, they and their Soviets on all levels are not plagued by issues which are tearing our country apart as Congress "debates" and "studies" them.

CHAPTER X

CONSTRUCTIVENESS VERSUS OBSTRUCTIVENESS

It is in the standing commissions, as I pointed out, that the main work of the Supreme Soviet is done. However, they are arms of the Supreme Soviet subservient to that highest body. Theoretically, our standing committees likewise are supposed to bear the same relationship to the House and Senate. In life, it works out quite differently. After describing "the neat textbook diagrams outlining how a bill becomes a law", the author of *Who Runs Congress* states: "To get a more realistic picture, we must look at the ruling forces of Congress: the committee system, which gives inordinate power to forty-odd men; the seniority system which chooses the men who will exert the power; the rules of secrecy and the power-brokering which seal the system off from the people. The result is more autocratic than democratic." And they quote Congressman Morris Udall (a candidate for President in the 1976 Democratic primaries, *M.D.*) as declaring: "The parliament of the world's greatest democracy is not a democratic institution." (Ralph Nader, *Who Runs Congress*, pages 53-54.) Congressional committees delay, obstruct and bury legislation opposed by the powerful big business interests.

Though the 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act required that committee sessions be open to the public, "36 per cent were still secret" (*Who Runs Congress*, p. 63).

The situation as regards the commissions of the Supreme Soviet is quite different. No commission can delay or bottle up any proposed legislation. No chairperson can "stifle legislation" or "push bills through the floor by main force". The powers of the commissions are prescribed in the Statutes of the Standing Commissions which specifically spell out their function and sphere of activity. These are,

primarily: to draft proposals for consideration by one of the two Chambers of the Supreme Soviet or by the Presidium and to prepare conclusions on issues submitted to the Supreme Soviet and its Presidium. They not only do not obstruct, they are important instruments for the implementation of the laws and decisions adopted by the Supreme Soviet.

This important distinction between the powers and functioning of Congressional committees and those of the commissions of the Supreme Soviet is not a mere matter of difference in methods of work. It reflects the basic differences in the two societies. Our committees provide another, and as experience demonstrates, very effective instrument for the big business interests to exercise political control.

I witnessed the discussion in the Supreme Soviet on many significant pieces of legislation. Never did I observe any efforts to obstruct, delay or bury these or any other acts. On the contrary, there was the "unanimity" which so disturbs our press. The Supreme Soviet after careful consideration acts with "unanimity" on laws to improve the living conditions of the people.

The structure of the Soviet Government reflects one of the important characteristics that distinguishes the Soviets from our system of checks and balances which is supposed to "guarantee" democracy and prevent the abuse of power. In practice, the checks and balances constitute an obstacle course that exhausts and entangles our citizenry in a diabolically devised tangle.

No single leader, such as our President, can exercise a veto over legislation passed by the Supreme Soviet. The text of the law adopted by the two Chambers of the Supreme Soviet is stamped by the chairpersons of the Chambers and forwarded to the Chairman and Secretary of the Presidium who must sign it. It is a mere formality. The two Chambers have equal rights and are elected for the same period of time, five years. Thus, the Soviet of Nationalities, which gives equal representation to all 15 Republics regardless of size and population, is on a complete par with the Soviet of the Union which is elected by constituencies with equal populations.

The system of two Chambers of the Supreme Soviet is not based on checks and balances. The two Chambers reflect the equality in the government process of the 100 peoples composing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

As the unrepresentative, discriminatory composition of Congress and the Senate demonstrates, the existing structure hardly reflects the national composition of the U.S. However, even in other respects the House and Senate are not equals. For one thing members of the House are elected for two-year terms while the more exclusive "millionaires' club", the Senate, enjoys six-year terms. Then, too, Senators have the right to "filibuster" any legislation they oppose. This "right" has enabled extreme reactionaries and racists to kill progressive legislation.

The system of checks and balances, vetoes and filibusters is profoundly undemocratic. It not only checks the will of the majority, it amplifies the power of the most reactionary forces. A good example is the obstruction in the Senate of the ratification of the SALT II treaty signed by Presidents Carter and Brezhnev and supported by the mass of the American people. Yet, a distinct minority in the Senate succeeded in obstructing it. The crassly undemocratic character of this situation was eloquently denounced in these words by the syndicated columnist Richard Strout, long-time Washington correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, (*San Francisco Examiner*, October 10, 1979): "My biggest reason for apprehension is that America abandons democracy in treaty ratification. It requires a two-thirds Senate vote, not a majority, and it doesn't let the House vote at all.

"America does this at its peril. I think it means that one negative vote cancels two affirmative votes, and that 34 out of 535 elected legislators (House and Senate combined, *M.D.*) can veto a treaty that took seven years to achieve... What it means today is that one Joe McCarthy (the infamous red-baiting witch-hunter of the 1950s, *M.D.*) can cancel out two Fulbrights (well-known former liberal Senator, *M.D.*) or if you consider the non-voting House, 15 other representatives". That's checking democracy with a vengeance!

CHAPTER XI

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN ACTION

During the upheavals of the 1960s in the Black ghettos, Chicano and Hispanic barrios of the U.S. a new slogan was born: *affirmative action*. Taken up by native Americans and Asians it expressed the demand for recompensation by an oppressed people long denied elementary human rights. The injustices not only abused millions of Americans for decades and centuries, they inflicted economic, cultural and political disadvantages upon them. Affirmative action represented a demand for an end to the second class citizenship. Six decades of Soviet power is a living demonstration of affirmative action in action. Talk of political equality of the Republics would be meaningless without making them all truly equal economically, culturally and educationally. And this meant that for a considerable period of time the disadvantaged peoples had to be accorded more equality than the less disadvantaged. They had to be more than equal to achieve equality.

Long before the term "affirmative action" had ever been coined, Lenin projected its essence as the basis upon which genuine equality of peoples and a unified single socialist state must be built. Here is how Lenin spelled out affirmative action in action: "Internationalism on the part of oppressors... must consist not only in the observance of formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation... that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice." The Russian people who themselves suffered from the inequalities of Czarism and capitalism were asked and accepted inequality to make up for the greater inequalities inflicted on the oppressed peoples. This Program of Affirmative Action was adopted as early as 1922 by the 11th Congress of the Communist Party

of the Soviet Union and further developed by the 12th Congress in 1923. In other words more than 40 years before the slogan was raised in the U.S. it became one of the cardinal points in the program of construction of socialism. It was the implementation of this principle of affirmative action that transformed the USSR into the advanced state it is today.

The USSR comprises 15 Union Republics, which, in turn, include 20 Autonomous Republics, 8 Autonomous Regions and 10 Autonomous Areas, all with their own defined borders and powers. The 268.8 million population embraces more than 100 nationalities and ethnic groups. Only about 50 per cent are Russians. But as far as the U.S. press is concerned, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is still Russia today, more than six decades after the October Revolution.

I travelled widely through Union Republics and many Autonomous Republics and Regions. Vestiges of the old still existed side by side with the new. However, they only reminded one of the giant strides made by these formerly oppressed peoples.

Nowhere did I see backward regions. Nowhere did I come across a single clash between peoples of different races and nationalities. Nowhere did I witness the use of police and military force such as I had observed during the "occupation" of Harlem by an overwhelmingly white police force during the ghetto outburst in 1964. Neither did my colleagues (you can be sure a single incident would have made headlines in our press). Certainly, if any such thing had happened, it would have been a big story. The true story of how the large family of Soviet peoples speaking a host of different languages lives remains, unfortunately for us, an almost untold story. We would, indeed, benefit by taking an objective look at Soviet experience in bringing about harmonious and cooperative relations among its many peoples.

The political inequality that existed under Czarism was based upon profound economic and cultural inequality. More than one-third of the population lived under feudal, patriarchal conditions. Most of the areas today making up Soviet Republics, particularly in Central Asia and the

Caucasus, were agrarian and raw-material appendages—rich plums for investment of Russian and foreign capital. The latter, especially British and French capital, controlled the oil of Azerbaijan, the cotton-processing of Central Asia, the coal and steel of the Ukraine. More than 40 nationalities had no written language of their own. Czarist Russia with its frequent and deliberately provoked clashes between peoples and the arbitrary treatment of national minorities by Czarist officials richly deserved the stigma of being called “a prison-house of nations”. Thus, history bequeathed to the builders of the first socialist state the problem of overcoming not only economic backwardness but also deeply imbedded inequalities, prejudices and suspicions.

Even prior to the Revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks elaborated a program for the solution of the nationalities question. On its very first day of existence the Soviet Government at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets declared it would guarantee the full right to self-determination of all nationalities inhabiting Russia. To implement its nationalities policy the Soviets set up the People's Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities. For the first time in history an organ enjoying executive power and representing all the nationalities of the country was established. In January 1918 a Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People was proclaimed. It established self-determination of nations up to secession and formation of independent states; abolition of all privileges and restrictions; guarantee of free and full development of all national minorities and ethnic groups. The Soviet Government recognized the independence of Finland and Poland.

From the first days of the Revolution everything was done to eliminate national prejudices and overcome national divisions. The formerly oppressed peoples were from the very beginning actively involved in every sphere of Soviet life. By their joint struggle the peoples of former Czarist Russia gave living expression to the Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People. The country was proclaimed a Republic of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies established on

CHAPTER III

AT THE FRONT AND IN THE REAR

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union which began on June 22, 1941, cruelly interrupted the peaceful construction in the USSR and the competition between the two social systems. One can only speculate *how much farther advanced the USSR would today have been in that contest had it not been compelled to devote its entire energy and resources to fight for its very life and to save the world from fascism.* Twenty million people killed, 25 million homeless, 1,710 towns destroyed, more than 70,000 villages demolished, 32,000 industrial enterprises reduced to rubble, nearly 98,000 collective and 1,876 state farms plundered, 30 per cent of the national wealth destroyed—such were the losses suffered by the Soviet Union in the war.

The Nazi invasion put the Soviet socialist system to its most severe test. The foundations laid in the brief historical period of two decades proved to be strong indeed. Other powerful, long-established states, such as France, the cradle of bourgeois democracy, collapsed before the Nazi blitzkrieg. It was left to the world's only socialist country, the newly-created Soviet State, to provide the necessary strength, sacrifice and will to defeat the most powerful military machine the world had ever known.

The war transformed the work of the Soviets from top to bottom. They had one task: to mobilize the entire country, its resources and people, to drive out the enemy and defeat fascism. On June 30, 1941, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Communist Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government set up the State Committee for Defense of the USSR, an emergency body of the highest state authority, to provide all the means and materiel to defend the country and to achieve victory.

the basis of the union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics. In fact, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, or the RSFSR, was formed on November 7, 1917; the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed on December 25, 1917; the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, on January 1, 1919; the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, on November 29, 1920; the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, on April 28, 1920, and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, on February 25, 1921.

All the then existing Soviet Republics were threatened by a common enemy, the forces of internal counter-revolution and external imperialist intervention. Thus, the cooperation of the Soviet peoples during the period of the Civil War and foreign intervention took the form of a military-political alliance. The Soviet Republics agreed upon the formation of a united army, a single military and political leadership and the pooling of their resources to defend their Revolution.

To fight effectively they not only had to unite militarily but economically. Experience had taught them that the revolutionary gains they had won could only be maintained and extended by a firm unity based on full equality. Thus, the military-political alliance laid the groundwork for unification into a multinational state.

With the defeat of counter-revolution and intervention, a period of peaceful socialist construction ensued.

The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic formalized its relations with other Republics in the economic, political and cultural fields by concluding appropriate bilateral agreements.

These agreements played an important role in the advance toward a single socialist state. They rallied the independent Soviet Republics around the Russian Federation, the most advanced Soviet Republic. It was in confronting and resolving concrete problems that the friendship of the peoples was strengthened. Difficult problems were not lacking. Struggle had to be waged against Great Russian chauvinism, the heritage of the Czarist regime. The selfless role played by the Russian people in aiding the formerly oppressed peoples to achieve the level

of advanced peoples ensured the success of that struggle. At the same time, reactionary bourgeois nationalist tendencies toward artificial separation, exploited and aggravated by the defeated exploiter classes and foreign capital, had to be overcome.

Life itself demanded the creation of a single socialist state. Its establishment was carefully considered by the Communist Party and congresses of Soviets. The First All-Union (USSR) Congress of Soviets, attended by 2,215 delegates, opened on December 30, 1922. It ratified a Declaration and Treaty on the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It included: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan), the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Congress elected the Central Executive Committee of the USSR as the supreme organ of power in-between congresses.

In January 1924, the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets adopted the USSR Constitution guaranteeing full equality and sovereignty and the right of every Union Republic to withdraw from the Union, and granting all existing Soviet Republics and future ones the right to join the Union. The Constitution defined the status and rights of the Union Republics and declared that territory could not be altered without their consent. It established one common citizenship: a citizen of a republic was automatically a citizen of the USSR. It was at that early date that the two equal Chambers, Soviet of Nationalities and Soviet of the Union, were established.

In May 1925, the Third Congress of Soviets admitted the Uzbek SSR and the Turkmen SSR into the Union. The Kirghiz SSR, originally formed as an Autonomous Region on October 14, 1924, progressed first to the status of an Autonomous Republic and then to that of a Union Republic on December 5, 1936. The Kazakh SSR followed a similar course of development. Formed August 26, 1920 as an Autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation, it was reconstituted as a Union Republic on December 5, 1936.

In 1940 following the overthrow of their bourgeois

governments and the restoration of Soviet power (proclaimed back in 1917 but later overthrown with the assistance of White Guards and foreign interventionists), Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia requested and were granted admission to the Union. The same year Bessarabia, which had been seized by monarchist Romania in 1918, was returned to the Soviet state and, together with the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, they formed the Moldavian SSR.

I sketched this brief history of the formation of the USSR because it traces the process which led to the establishment of the single Soviet state. Contrary to the distorted picture of compulsion and "Russification", it was a process that progressed through the stages of cooperation, mutual assistance and common goals.

Can one speak of a solution of the nationalities question in the U.S.?

The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution adopted more than 100 years ago were supposed to grant Black people full citizenship. It was the taunting gap between word and deed that led to the ghetto explosions and the massive demonstrations of the 1960s. I was among the 200,000 who massed before the Lincoln monument in our nation's capital on August 28, 1963, to hear the historic indictment by Dr. Martin Luther King of a century of crime against Black and minority Americans.

1963 marked the centenary of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Abraham Lincoln abolishing slavery and setting the Black people "free". In searing words that stigmatized a century of hypocrisy, King made a devastating arraignment of our bourgeois, racist democracy: "But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later the life of the Negro is still crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land... America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned." The fact

that Black faces are more evident in government, on television, in banks and white collar jobs has not changed the situation essentially. And although a relatively small number of Blacks have been elevated into the middle class and a few have even joined the very rich, on the whole the U.S. Black population still finds itself in no enviable situation.

The official government figure for unemployment among Black youth is 40 per cent. However, in Chicago it is in fact 60 per cent, 20 per cent above the official rate. And 31.1 per cent of Blacks (7,595,000) live at the poverty level, as against 9.1 per cent of the white population in that category (*World Almanac* 1979, p. 216).

"Black males could expect to live to be 60, 7.9 fewer years than their white counterparts. Between ages 25 and 44 the death rate of Blacks is nearly 2.5 times that of whites... The rate for Black infants was still twice the rate for white" (National Center for Health Statistics—*San Francisco Examiner*, December 5, 1979).

In respect to equal education the situation has hardly improved in the last ten to twenty years. As a reporter I witnessed the mass school boycotts that swept the nation during the early 1960s. For years Black mothers had inwardly smoldered as they watched their children emerge semi-literate after graduating high school. They well understood that this was economic as well as educational discrimination. Joined by many sympathetic white parents, they finally exploded into massive demonstrations and boycotts. Their struggle produced some modest reforms but the situation basically did not change.

The condition of the native American Indian population, if anything, is worse. The *International Herald Tribune* (July 19, 1969) noted: "A report released by the Bureau of Census offered statistical evidence that American Indians are the poorest minority in the country." It pointed out that "nearly 40 per cent of the Indian population lived below the poverty level." The unemployment rate is five times the national average. Nearly 60 per cent have less than an eight-grade education. The infant mortality rate is 10 points above the national average. Active cases of tuberculosis among native American Indians and Alaskan peoples is seven times the national average.

Wars of extermination, steady encroachment on their good land, disease and neglect had a genocidal effect upon the Indian people.

Whereas in the USSR the state and the whole of society have concentrated their efforts on eliminating all the inequalities inflicted by the Czarist regime upon different nations and nationalities, the situation in the U.S. is different. Certain reforms to improve the life of the Blacks, Indians and other colored people are being carried out by the authorities only under the pressure of democratic public opinion and the disadvantaged people themselves. An example of this are the concessions which the authorities had to make in the mid-1960s.

Insignificant improvement in the life of America's "pariahs" was achieved at the price of the death of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the slaying of dozens of courageous Black, Hispanic and native American Indians, the arrests and beatings of thousands. An unceasing struggle has to be waged to defend every slight gain.

CHAPTER XII

FROM FORMAL TO ACTUAL EQUALITY

Talk of political equality of the Republics would be meaningless without making all of them truly equal economically, culturally and educationally. And this meant that for a considerable period of time the disadvantaged peoples had to be accorded more rights and opportunities.

What did it mean "to make up" for the inequality of the formerly oppressed people? It meant that the Russian people themselves 75 per cent illiterate had to lead a cultural revolution not only for themselves but for peoples who had 98-per-cent illiteracy.

It meant the Russian Republic whose backward industry (by Western standards) had been largely destroyed during the Civil War and intervention not only had to restore its own factories but serve as the base for the construction of plants and the training of technicians, managers and skilled workers for the industryless Republics of Central Asia and Transcaucasia.

It meant that the primitive agriculture of Russia which had been largely devastated in the Civil War not only had to be restored. Soviet Russia needed to set fraternal peoples an example in organizing modernized, collectivized farms and help them organize their own farms.

It meant that the universities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev not only had to turn out hundreds of thousands of engineers, doctors, teachers, technicians and thousands of scientists for Russia and the Ukraine but for Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kirghizia, Kazakhstan, Byelorussia and Tajikistan.

It meant that the schools of Moscow Art Theater, Moscow Conservatory and Bolshoi Theater, and the theaters of Leningrad had to produce the future artists,

directors, playwrights, dancers, and composers for the other Republics.

It meant more than that. It meant that the Russian people who had borne the brunt of the Civil War and were in the forefront of the struggle to defend the gains of the Revolution now had to tighten their belts harder in order to provide the necessary capital investment for building a new life in the former backward regions of the Russian Empire.

I saw a gigantic modern textile complex in Tashkent in 1970. It had its beginnings in the Reutov spinning and weaving factory (in the outskirts of Moscow) which was transferred to Uzbekistan in 1922. There is a huge steel mills in the industrial city of Bekabad, not far from Tashkent. It was the Kuznetsk Mills and the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Complex of the Russian Federation which helped equip Bekabad's mills.

The transformation of these once backward regions is indicated by these figures: during the Soviet years industrial output in Kazakhstan went up 600 times, in Tajikistan more than 500 times, in Kirghizia more than 400 times, in Turkmenia more than 130 times.

Uzbekistan which in pre-revolutionary days had only primitive small shops producing rugs and utensils today has more than 1,000 huge industrial plants and 100 branches of industry manufacturing tractors, excavators, compressors and cotton-picking machines. The former 750,000 primitive peasant households have been merged into 869 modern, industrial-type collective farms and 807 state farms. Pre-revolutionary Uzbekistan produced 533,000 tons of raw cotton. In 1979, the output reached 5.8 million tons. Uzbekistan which had only two per cent literacy in Czarist days now has two times as many students per 10,000 population as France and nearly three times as many as Great Britain. It has: an Academy of Sciences, two opera houses, 8 drama theaters, 9 musical theaters, 3 children's theaters and an excellent ballet theater. It annually publishes 5,000 titles in a total edition of 30 million, half in the Uzbek language, and has 200 newspapers with a daily circulation of 2.5 million.

Most of all the significance of this transformation is demonstrated by the status and role of women in Uzbekistan and in Central Asia as a whole. For years after Soviet power had been established and even after these Republics had been admitted into the Union, a struggle had to be waged to overcome the tenacious feudal survivals. Uzbek women told me of the role played by their Russian sisters. The Russian women had to literally hide behind the veil in order to help their Asian and Caucasian sisters cast it off. Many Russian women lost their lives in this struggle.

In 1970 I met with leaders of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet. There were quite a lot of women among them. Almost one-third of the Deputies to the Uzbek Supreme Soviet are women. That figure reaches 44 per cent in the local Soviets. Women constitute 39 per cent of the Republic's students in the universities and institutes.

However, it was the women we met who more than these statistics drove home to my wife Gail and me the full meaning of effective Soviet action. It was in the village of Bagir, not far from the Kara Kum desert in the Turkmen Republic that this was most vividly demonstrated. At the same time we got a look at a village Soviet of a Central Asian Republic. We had requested a meeting with the chairman of the executive committee of the Bagir village Soviet. And greeting us in a colorful flowing native dress was Ogulgyuzel Taganova, a handsome woman of 52. Taganova was the chairperson of the Bagir Soviet which she headed since 1955. Speaking softly in the Turkmen language, she drew a picture of the work of the Soviet. It provided us with a vivid picture of the life of today's Soviet rural areas. Taganova had at her finger tips all the facts, statistics and problems of the huge cattle-breeding state and collective farms. She was equally at home with the situation in the village schools, the latest developments in theater and cultural life.

Taganova told us eight of the nine chairpersons of village Soviets in the Ashkhabad region were women and this, she noted, is typical of the Turkmen Republic.

Like in the USSR Supreme Soviet, the main work of the village Soviets is carried out by standing commissions. The

Women's Commission composed of nine members deals with problems faced by women particularly in respect to work, choosing a profession, and health.

The Youth Commission concerns itself with the multitude of problems confronted by the young, especially in respect to making rural life more attractive to them.

The Cultural Commission supervises the village Palace of Culture which has a 500-seat theater. The Commission works closely with Ashkhabad's drama and opera and ballet theaters, and dance groups which often send troupes to perform in Bagir.

The Health Commission, headed by a medical member of the village Soviet, overlooks the work of the village hospital and maternity home. Other commissions supervise other aspects of village life. This manifold work is directed by Taganova.

Taganova herself provided the most eloquent testimony of the transformation of Turkmen rural life. Hers was the story we heard from the lips of many women of the Republic. Taganova's mother had suffered the fate of most women in Czarist days. She was married off at the age of 12 to a man much older than herself. When her husband died she was promptly sold to another husband.

Ogulgyuzel Taganova's was a different life. She finished school and became the first woman tractor driver in the Ashkhabad region. Then it was discovered she was gifted with an exceptional voice. Her village music teacher encouraged her and Taganova was accepted by the Moscow Conservatory. However, she longed for her village. When she learned that her mother had fallen ill, despite pleas of the Conservatory director, she returned home. Her deep attachment to her village was evident. We asked her if she confronted difficulties in being accepted as village leader by the men of the village. She smiled and replied: "In the beginning." Then she added wryly: "But they got used to the idea." It suddenly occurred to us that during our tea and discussion, it was the male members of the village Soviet who had served us.

The village Soviet today faces far more complex tasks than in the early days of Soviet power—the range of its responsibilities has increased. This we discovered when we

visited a collective farm near Dushambe, the capital of Tajikistan. It was more like an agricultural town. The farm's administrative buildings closely resembled in appearance and atmosphere the office buildings of Soviet plants. It is the nerve center that directs a 62-square-mile farm with an 18,000 population. The farm includes 12,000 acres of arable land producing cotton, fodder, sugar beet, maize and abounding with orchards and vineyards. It has 15,000 sheep and 2,700 cows.

There are 14 schools with 5,200 pupils and 300 teachers, 22 stores, three hospitals, two Palaces of Culture. It employs 260 types of machinery, 80 harvesters and 100 trucks. The farm structure of organization, too, resembles that of a large industrial plant.

The farm subsidizes 450 of its students studying in higher institutions. Their stipends are higher than those received by all other students. They are in duty bound to return to their collective farm upon graduation. Mamatir Makhmudov, its dynamic chairman, is a Deputy of the local Soviet. He differs little from the directors of Soviet plants and construction projects we met. He reflected the same combination of technical knowledge with managerial skill. This is the face of most of today's Soviet and state collective farms. (A state farm is a state—not cooperative—agricultural enterprise whose workers draw wages as at any other state enterprise.)

I revisited Central Asia and particularly one of its Republics, Uzbekistan, almost ten years later, in May 1979. It was late afternoon when we arrived at the Ilyich collective farm (named after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin), 100 kilometers from Tashkent. We were late but patiently waiting at the farm's entrance were the members of the village Soviet. A man of about 60 stepped forth to greet me. He was Sagdi Rakhmatulayev, Chairman of the farm and a Deputy of the village Soviet. There, before me, stood the living history of Soviet Uzbekistan.

Born in a poverty-stricken peasant family, Rakhmatulayev experienced all the stages of the development of Soviet life: the struggle against the Basmachi, the forces of feudal reaction who fiercely fought to retain their privileges; the struggle for precious water to nourish the

parched earth and make it yield its treasures; the hard work for collectivization when it was necessary to overcome centuries of deeply-imbedded habits of backwardness and individualism; the cultural revolution which transformed illiterate shepherds into engineers and scientists.

"I'm here because my father fought for collectivization," Rakhmatulayev told me as he proceeded to escort me over the collective farm's domain. "I've been to your country. They sneer at our collective farm system," he said. His eyes sparkled with a mischievous twinkle. "What do they know of our life? And do they even take the trouble to find out?" His voice contained more surprise than anger. "If they really were interested in us, they would learn that collectivization meant life itself to millions of poor peasant youths like me. Come let me show you what our Soviet life has meant to us."

I was prepared for the usual recounting of revealing statistics and a demonstration of the farm's products. Instead he walked me along a path displaying the pictorial history of the October Revolution in Uzbekistan. Step by step we traced that history. The members of the village Soviet, half of whom were women, followed in solemn silence. The silence became more pronounced as we reached the end of the path. There stood a simple village monument covered with bouquets, wreaths and individual flowers of all colors. On it were inscribed the names of the village honored dead. They numbered about 200. The list revealed the multi-national character of Uzbekistan: Uzbek names, of course, predominated but there were also Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Kazakh and Kara-Kalpak names among them. (Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic is part of Uzbekistan.)

Later I learned that Rakhmatulayev was a well-known veteran of the war of 1941-45 against Nazi Germany, who had fought the entire war right up to the fall of Berlin. "Yesterday we paid tribute to our heroes—you should have been here," he said almost in rebuke. "Yesterday" was May 9th, V-E Day which unfortunately is barely noted in our country but is celebrated throughout the USSR. I told him I had joined in the tribute to the dead in Tashkent.

Rakhmatulayev's hand swept across the exhibition.

"This explains everything!" His hand then rested on the monument. "They had something to die for." It was only after this moving tribute that Rakhmatulayev and the members of the village Soviet proceeded to escort me around their domain. Rakhmatulayev was a walking encyclopedia, but his statistics were unnecessary. They were all around me: the well-tended livestock, the luscious orchards, the vegetable gardens and mulberry trees (silk is a major product). But Rakhmatulayev and his group were particularly proud of the beauty that surrounded this prosperity. Flowers, plants and trees were tenderly cared for. Their fields were not just their workshops—they were shrines of beauty. These were poets as well as farmers. For our meeting place they had chosen an idyllic spot. Twenty years ago—like most of the fertile farmland—it had been a wasteland. Over a lavish table that featured plum size strawberries, the prize of the farm, we discussed the work of the village Soviet. In the past decade mechanization and modernization had vastly expanded the scope of the collective and state farms. The educational and cultural level of rural life had markedly risen.

Deloran Amanbaeva, an attractive mother of four, the deputy chairperson of the village Soviet, is a schoolteacher. Amanbaeva is also an agronomist. She completed an agricultural institute in 1966. I asked her: "Don't you find it hard to combine your teaching and domestic responsibilities with your political work?" Amanbaeva's face revealed that she had found my question strange. "On the contrary," she replied. "I would not be as familiar with the needs of our schools and our children if I were separated from them."

Amanbaeva's work is with the village Educational Commission. And her responsibilities as a mother, didn't they interfere with her many other functions? "Of course, it is not easy," she admitted. "Without our nurseries, our Young Pioneers' palaces and camps, our Komsomol organization and our schools, it would be very hard." She paused. "It's much better now. Besides, we women are good organizers. We have to be," she added with a knowing smile. "I don't look at it as difficulties. What is more joyful in life than to serve one's people, to make their lives a bit more happy?"

A hardbitten journalist would smile sceptically at such "corn". And in terms of our political life these words would indeed produce skeptical smiles and perhaps even a snicker. But then, to understand Amanbaeva, one has to grasp the essential difference between Soviet democracy and our own.

Perhaps, our rebellious youth of the 1960s who raised the banner of participatory democracy would best understand it. Soviet democracy is participatory democracy. People's power is what rescues it from the frustrations and sense of powerlessness that characterize our talking democracy where urgent needs are smothered in the soft pillow of aimless discussions.

The village Soviets (as Soviets everywhere) face many serious and as yet unresolved problems. The age-old gap between village and city, which, as I observed, has been narrowed even in the period since my last visit, is still a wide one.

With the increased mechanization and modernization of farms the problems of management have become more and more complex. The need to make maximum use of the soil and the equipment with minimum waste has yet to be fully met. Not every collective and state farm has the full complement of capable, talented organizers such as those I met on the Ilyich farm. The process of development of the Soviets has hardly yet reached its summit. But the Soviets as a form of power reveal the tremendous talent and capabilities that lie in the people.

CHAPTER XIII
THE LIFE OF A MAN, THE LIFE
OF THE REPUBLIC

I entered the large but simply furnished room in the building of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. A slender, wiry man of about 70 who looked more like a school teacher than a state leader, greeted me with a warm smile and firm handclasp. The smile and handclasp belonged to Vladimir Lobanok, deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Byelorussia.

Lobanok's life spanned not only the years but all the stages of his Republic's and the USSR's history. Like most Soviet leaders I met his roots were deeply imbedded in the soil. He was born in 1907 in a Byelorussian village in a poor peasant family. He was only ten when the Revolution took place but memories of the miserable life in Czarist Russia never left him.

In Czarist days landlords owned 65 per cent of the best land and 20 per cent of the population was completely landless. Byelorussia's "industry" produced skins and straw. Eighty per cent were illiterate...

Lobanok like many men of his age wanted to study. Although he was obliged to work from childhood he never abandoned his dream of studying. Only under Soviet rule did his dream come true. He studied well. The gifted youth wanted to enter college. Since Byelorussia did not have a single college under the Czars, Lobanok went to Russia.

People like Lobanok formed the native cadre which trained millions of people to run industries, direct universities, head collective and state farms and lead the Soviets on every level.

After graduating from college Lobanok worked in the Ministry of Agriculture. Later he became director of an

institute formed in Byelorussia. He was elected secretary of the Vitebsk regional party committee in March 1941. A few months later the full fury of the Nazi invasion struck Byelorussia. Lobanok became secretary of the underground party committee which led the partisan struggle against Hitlerite invaders.

The Communist Party and the Soviets never stopped functioning in the territory of this Republic. In Moscow the Central Staff of the partisan movement attached to General Headquarters was formed. The Byelorussian Headquarters which directed the struggle against the enemy in Byelorussia was subordinated to it. During the Nazi occupation over 20 large partisan zones existed. Soviet power controlled about 60 per cent of the territory of Byelorussia. It directed the operation of enterprises, ran schools, issued newspapers and leaflets and in general provided administrative leadership.

As the Soviet armies advanced, those who had to work underground became more active and operated more boldly and openly. In conditions of the oppressive occupation the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was truly a partisan republic.

Lobanok became commander of a partisan brigade of 17,000 which controlled an area of 3,700 square kilometers. There were in Byelorussia 1,255 detachments numbering 374,000 partisans. There were 70,000 in the underground party organizations and groups, in which not only Byelorussians, but members of other nationalities of the USSR fought.

Lobanok was conferred the highest Soviet title, Hero of the Soviet Union, and awarded the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star Medal for his courageous leadership in the enemy's rear. He described the struggle of the Byelorussian partisans in his books—*Fighting for the Homeland* and *Partisans Go into Battle*.

After the war he was elected chairman of the Gomel City Soviet. Then he was elected Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR. He became first deputy chairman of the Republic's Council of Ministers and also Minister of Agriculture. And now he is deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR.

Getting acquainted with Lobanok I better understood why the land of skins and straw now produces computers and exports 100-ton trucks to many countries of the world. There are 36,500 research workers now in the Republic. Five thousand scientists alone work in institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Byelorussian SSR which is a leading center of physics and cybernetics. The Byelorussian SSR has 31 institutes where 174,000 students are studying, and it has 133 specialized secondary schools with 164,000 pupils.

When in the course of conversation with Lobanok I became interested in the state structure of the Republic he said that Byelorussia has its own Constitution conforming to the Constitution of the USSR, with specific features of the Byelorussian SSR being taken into account. I asked Lobanok to enlarge on this point. And here is what I learned from him.

The system of economic and social relations of the Byelorussian SSR with the other Republics is such that the level of economic development of the Republic is constantly evening up. In all aspects of planning and decision-making full and equal representation of the Republics is guaranteed. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of every Republic is ex-officio a Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Each Republic has equal representation in the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Representatives of the Union and Autonomous Republics are included in all standing commissions of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The Republic directs its economy, manages its enterprises. Article 77 of the Soviet Constitution clearly gives the Republics the power to "coordinate and control the activity of enterprises, institutions, and organizations" in the territory subordinate to them. This is not merely "on the books". Every five-year plan spells out in detail how this is carried out.

Lobanok told me that 93 per cent of the Republic's budget comes from taxes on the profits of the Republic's enterprises. These include enterprises in meat, milk, food and light industry in general, as well as in fuel, automobile,

transport and road construction industries shared by the USSR and the Republics.

I asked Lobanok and the other leaders of the Republican Soviet if they ever had to consider dismissing teachers, closing or curtailing schools, libraries and hospitals because of insufficient funds. They smiled understandingly as they shook their heads.

The annual budget of every Republic provides for expansion of housing, schools, hospitals and nurseries, and for all the social and cultural needs of the people. Lobanok stated that matter-of-factly.

And what if your Republic needs financial aid from the Supreme Soviet? "We receive it," Lobanok replied unhesitatingly. "The development of our Republic bears testimony to that," he added with a smile.

"Of course, we cannot meet all our requirements at once. Therefore we always emphasize that all this depends on how successfully we fulfill our five-year plans and solve various complex tasks.

"Don't think that our life is without problems," Lobanok noted. "What are they?" I asked. "They vary... For instance, we lack sufficient building material for construction," he replied. I was surprised. "But you lead the world in production of cement," I noted. Lobanok nodded. "But we also lead the world in construction, especially of homes," he pointed out. That is indeed so.

He paused and added a problem very familiar to me. "We have to improve the quality of our commodities." I took the occasion to frankly raise another problem which I noted confronted the entire Soviet Union and not just Byelorussia. Services. I told him: "Your services lag far behind your impressive achievements in industry, science and culture, and complicate problems of every-day living of the Soviet people. The workers engaged in them are often rude and negligent in their duties. This shortcoming is widely commented on by the Western press who often concentrate upon it to conceal your far more important achievements."

Lobanok and his colleagues listened attentively and agreed with my criticisms. "Yes, it's a serious problem,"

Lobanok stated, "and we are attempting to do much more to overcome it."

Our conversation touched upon such aspects as Byelorussia's international relations. Article 80 of the Soviet Constitution states that "A Union Republic has the right to enter into relations with other states, conclude treaties with them, exchange diplomatic and consular representatives, and take part in the work of international organizations". As I have already pointed out, the Republics at one time recognized the need for a uniform foreign policy. This, however, does not nullify the provisions of Article 80. The Byelorussian SSR as well as the Ukrainian SSR are members of the United Nations and play an active role in the affairs of that world organization. Byelorussia has its representatives in UNESCO, the World Health Organization and several other organizations.

Perhaps what most vividly impressed me in the conversation with Lobanok was when I learned about the mass involvement of the Byelorussian people in all government and administrative institutions. Ten per cent of the Republic's population of 9,511,000 (1980) are involved in the work of the Soviets. There are 80,000 Deputies (1980) in the 2,000 regional, city, district and village Soviets. More than 800,000 people have gone through this school of management of economic and social development of the Republic.

It is this unprecedented mass involvement in making and implementing decisions that I believe is the chief distinguishing characteristic of Soviet democracy.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRESENT AND THE PAST OF A SMALL TOWN

Volkovysk is a small town in Western Byelorussia about 20 miles from the Polish border. It seems strange that I should have any association with it since I have not the faintest recollection of this ancient small city. But Volkovysk was my birthplace!

I was only two years old when my mother fled Volkovysk with my three sisters in the wake of the first German invasion during World War I. The first stories children usually remember from mother's lips are fairy tales. Mine were of war; of panicky refugees fighting to squeeze into tightly packed trains bearing wounded and dying soldiers; of the death of Lyuba, my favorite sister, at the age of six from dysentery.

Ours was a two-year odyssey of flight across Russia, Siberia, Harbin, Shanghai, Yokohama to San Francisco. We arrived in San Francisco to learn that the Czar had been overthrown. My sisters and I hadn't the faintest idea what that meant but the joy in my mother's eyes, the first flush of happiness we had seen on her careworn face, thrilled us.

Nostalgic members of San Francisco's Russian colony hugged us as they prepared to return home. My poor mother was terribly torn. She longed to join them but my father was waiting for us in New York. Had he been in San Francisco I believe our stay in our adopted country would have been a very short one. Both my parents deeply loved Russia and the Russian people. Like many Russian Jews it was the Czarist pogroms that drove them from the land they loved. My father and mother never returned to the land of their and my birth. But they kept a corner of Russia in our home.

Deep indeed were the wounds left in tearing themselves from their roots. My father's never really healed—he bore them with him to his early grave. "You can eat well but you can't sleep well in America!" he used to wail. My mother's wounds healed. Not because her longing for her homeland was less, but because she was quickly involved in the struggle to make her new home a better one.

Many Russian Jews of my parents' generation were touched by the spirit of the Russian Revolution—to one degree or another. Quite a few had participated in the 1905-1907 Revolution. When the history of the U.S. revolutionary and labor movements is fully written, the significant contributions these class-conscious immigrants made will occupy some of the most stirring pages. For they brought with them the sweep of the Russian Revolution.

They rejoiced in the great accomplishments of the Soviet people. They shared with them their sorrows during the tragic days of the Nazi invasion.

No Zionist organizations "paid" their way in their flight from Czarist pogroms. Nor did the U.S. press greet them as "dissidents". On the contrary, they were subjected to humiliating, often anti-Semitic examinations at Ellis Island. No one promised or offered them good jobs and apartments. On the contrary, most were driven to work in inhuman sweatshops and shoved into dreary, rat-ridden slums. They were "Jews without money".

The present crop of immigrants, willingly or unwillingly, are exploited by our cold-war warriors.

In 1970 I made a special tour of Leningrad, Riga, Vilnius, Kishinev and Birobidjan to get an accurate picture of the life of Soviet Jews. I wrote a series of articles, "Soviet Jews *The New York Times* Does Not Write About".

One of the most monstrous distortions of the truth ever perpetrated on the world, is the lie of "Soviet anti-semitism". It is a distortion of the real state of affairs. It is in keeping with Goebbels' tactic of the Big Lie to accuse the Soviet Union which saved millions of Jews from Hitler's gas chamber, of anti-semitism.

The real story of Soviet Jews is that in October 1917 they as well as Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Kirghiz and members of other peoples and nationalities won social

liberation, and that they are an equal part of every sphere of Soviet life.

The basic factor motivating those leaving the USSR, as I discovered from numerous discussions, is not non-existing persecution, but *economic illusions*. An illusion grips many immigrants, not just Jews, who flock to America. The illusion that in America everyone can *strike it rich!* The fact that a few did only served to nourish the fantasy.

It was to shatter that illusion that Mike Gold wrote his classic *Jews Without Money*. Nevertheless, some illusions die hard. My mother and father were, and their offspring remain, like most Jews in the U.S. "Jews without money".

And so after an absence of six decades I came to a town where I had been born. My hosts were three Soviet Deputies of the Volkovysk City and District Soviets: Pavel Rogov, deputy chairman of the City Soviet, Vladimir Rudachenko, chairman of the District Soviet and Grigori Litvak, Deputy to the City Soviet and director of the dairy factory. Thus I was afforded an opportunity to get personally acquainted with the Soviet Deputies of my birthplace.

Mine was a journey into the past as well as present. I visited Volkovysk's historical museum. It is housed in an ancient building that once had served as the headquarters of the Second Western Russian Army commanded by Prince Bagration, one of the heroes of the patriotic war against Napoleon's invasion of 1812.

Even before it unfolded its pages of history, the museum linked Volkovysk with our Brooklyn home. The bespectacled, scholarly director who served as our guide proudly handed me a book. It was about Volkovysk and was written by a Volkovysker who had lived in America. My heart leaped in recognition. The author was Dr. Moses Einhorn, a friend of my parents who had often been to our home.

We stopped before photographs depicting street scenes of armed struggle. So that's what the spirit of 1905 was like in my home town! It, too, had set up Soviets, like the whole of Russia. The militant railroad workers had set up a strike committee which not only took control of the railroads. It exercised administrative power, formed armed workers' guards and for a week controlled everything.

There once was a very popular U.S. radio program which linked the present with the past. It was appropriately entitled: "You Are There!" I was truly there! My joy gave way to sorrow. The Czarist police and troops were making brutal mass arrests! But I knew how things would turn out in the end—the seeds of workers' power had been planted and they would sprout.

My mother used to weep when she spoke of the suffering of the peasants. Here they were as they rose in angry demonstrations during the years 1910-12. In February 1912 five peasants were killed and 19 wounded. Just a year before I was born in Volkovysk! And now we came to the strike of bakery workers on August 11, 1913.

In September 1915, the German armies occupied Volkovysk. They came and my mother fled. This had brought us to the U.S.! Here personal history came to an end.

But what had happened to Volkovysk after we had gone? The stories I had heard were second-hand and came in bits and pieces. My parents had never fully lost contact with their home town. My mother used to sigh deeply as she read letters from friends and remnants of our family.

Now the full picture of the joy and sorrows of those years was coming to life. First the joy. It was written in the faces of the members of the Volkovysk Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies formed in December 1918. The exhilaration was short-lived. February 8, 1919, the occupying German army turned Volkovysk over to the Polish forces. The struggles that ensued have since been immortalized by Isaac Babel in his deathless *Red Cavalry*.

It was in towns like my birthplace that illiterate worker-peasant soldiers had become unforgettable heroes!

June 24, 1920, they liberated Volkovysk. September 26, 1920, they were compelled to withdraw. The Entente powers behind Poland proved to be too strong.

Western Byelorussia, where my Volkovysk is situated, embarked on the path of socialism 19 years after the Russian Federation and other Soviet Republics had done so. It paid dearly for that detour. More than 80 per cent of the peasants lived in dire poverty. A ruthless policy of Polonization was pursued. The Byelorussian language was

suppressed. The Jewish population comprising a considerable part of the town dwellers was in a sorry plight.

Then came a brief period of joy, a respite before the ghastly years to follow. October 22, 1939! What joy on the faces of the people of Volkovysk as they greeted their reunion with the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic! The Soviet army had liberated Western Byelorussian lands when Hitler invaded Poland. Western Byelorussia voted to rejoin the USSR.

After an absence of 19 years again there was workers' power in Volkovysk. Only now it was backed by the might accumulated in two decades of socialism.

Volkovysk worked feverishly to make up for lost time. It built hundreds of new homes. It plunged into carrying out a heady cultural revolution. It waged war against illiteracy. It opened wide the school doors. It reduced the work-day from 12 to 8 hours. It distributed land to the peasants and began to organize them into collective farms. Volkovysk was catching up fast! Now the clock pointed to June 22, 1941. My Volkovysk was in the very center of the Nazi storm. In New York my mother wept. My father who had died in 1929 was spared this sorrow. I have seen many scenes of Hitler's horrors. But never in my birthplace! Never in my home town! Among the mis-shapen bodies, piled obscenely like meat in a butcher shop, were dear friends and relatives.

In 1941 Volkovysk was a town of 16,000, 70 per cent Jewish. 9,238 people of the town and district were slaughtered by the Nazis. More than 80 per cent of the city was destroyed.

As if stepping out of the scenes of horror, a gray-headed, solidly-built man of about 60 approached me. His name was Sugarman and he was one of the 500 or so Jews who had survived the holocaust and returned to live in Volkovysk. Sugarman and his two sons had helped to rebuild the town. They are construction workers and engineers. His voice seemed to come from afar as he recalled those tragic days.

His father, mother, brother were killed by the Nazis. As did many young Jews, he escaped into the nearby forests and joined the partisans. Names that perhaps were familiar

to my parents were mentioned as leaders of these courageous detachments: Sofia Dvoretzkaya, Igor Galin, Semyon Olakh, Grigori Kozhemyakin and Maxim Shifrin. July 14, 1944, Volkovysk was liberated, not without the partisans' help...

The sun was shining in all its morning glory as together with Rogov, deputy chairman of the City Soviet, we left the museum and silently made our way to Volkovysk's memorial to its honored dead. How many times I had made this pilgrimage in this land of martyrs and memorials! No earth anywhere in the world clutches to its breast so many common graves! In Byelorussia the Nazis killed every fourth person.

I had taken my first exhilarating footsteps on this tortured soil as my mother proudly urged me on. Then I had gone away only to return many years after it had buried its dead.

Deputy chairman Rogov pointed to a ditch in a ravine. It had served as the place of execution. I thought of those in my country who had forgotten these dead and the debt we owed them and their living...

Like the legendary Phoenix, Volkovysk had risen from ashes. It is today a flourishing industrial town. A huge up-to-date foundry produces technological equipment used by auto plants all over the USSR. A large modern cement plant and much else.

Like all Soviet towns which suffered death, much of Volkovysk is new. Row on row of modern apartment houses gave it a smart look. The crane in the sky was also part of Volkovysk's horizon. Boys, stripped to their waists, were playing football (our soccer) in a playground adjoining their newly-built school.

Peace had come to Volkovysk. May it always be with you!

As in Leningrad and Volgograd, many of Volkovysk's present inhabitants are not natives. I jokingly remarked to my hosts, all of whom had come from other cities in Byelorussia, that I was the "only local man among you". Native or not, Volkovysk is theirs. New "Volkovyshers" reconstructed and rejuvenated this ancient town... Litvak, a tall, heavy-set man of 52 with a friendly face, came here

from Gomel. His father fought with the Soviet Army and was killed in the decisive Battle of Kursk.

Litvak with his mother was evacuated to Kazakhstan in 1942. Later he studied in a Minsk technical institute and worked in a dairy factory. Since 1970 he has been the director of Volkovysk's pride and joy, its dairy factory.

After visiting the museum I hardly had time to have a rest in the homey Hotel Beryozka when Rogov and Rudachenko rushed me to the milk plant. Litvak greeted me like a long lost "landsman". Proudly he escorted me through the plant. It was immaculate, fully automated—the equal of any I had seen in the U.S.

A fleet of milk trucks was bringing in fresh milk from neighboring collective and state farms. Young men and women in white were operating the conveyor system. Not a hand touched the products. Litvak ushered us into the computer center. The young woman in charge explained its operations. Valentina Preobrazhenskaya, a very pretty young woman with a very Russian face, beamed as the operator showed us the charts recording the daily output. Preobrazhenskaya heads the trade union. Most of the 600 workers in the plant are women.

Naturally, Litvak insisted that I sample his products. Spread out lavishly on a large table was a dairy lover's delight: huge pitchers of delicious, thick sour cream, heaping mounds of fresh cottage cheese and butter. Litvak regarded me incredulously when I inquired if preservatives were used.

On the way to my hotel I requested that we stop for a few moments on Lenin Avenue. It was not that Lenin Avenue had any particular sites. It was a typical Soviet main street. But I had made an important discovery in the museum. I had recalled that my parents always had a particular sparkle in their eyes when they spoke of Shirokaya Ulitsa (Wide Street). I later found out it was because that was where we lived. It turned out that the former Shirokaya Ulitsa is now Lenin Avenue! I searched every nook of Lenin Avenue. A few old buildings had survived the destruction. Which of these, if any, could have been my home?

Today the symbol of Volkovysk is a tower crane and carefree children playing in a school yard but if anyone symbolized the Jewish ghetto towns like the Volkovysk of my parents, it was Tevye the Milchikher (the Milkman) described by Sholom Aleichem. Tevye peddled milk squeezed from a scrawny cow. It was dragged on a rickety cart by an exhausted nag.

Tevye and Litvak! In the U.S. some of Tevye's descendants became milk magnates, exploiters of the labor of America's Tevyes. But Litvak breathed the spirit of Sholom Aleichem's Jews whose wealth lies in their humanity.

"What does a human being live for?" Litvak asked in that rhetorical self-questioning so typical of Sholom Aleichem's characters. "Wealth?" He sneered and dismissed it with a shrug. "Everyone wants to leave some good memory of himself after he has gone," he said philosophically. "You will leave it in your books. As for me, I want people to walk through a spotlessly clean dairy factory, taste its delicious, healthful products and remember that one, Grigori Lvovitch Litvak, had something to do with it all."

What a story Sholom Aleichem could now tell!

CHAPTER XV

THE SECRET OF CITIES WITHOUT CRISIS

Nothing more vividly demonstrates the difference between Soviet working democracy and U.S. talking democracy than a comparison between the cities of the two worlds. The gap between words and deeds was pointed up by the U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Shortly after his election, to demonstrate his "concern" for the plight of our cities and especially our decaying Black and Hispanic ghettos, former President Carter made a well-publicized visit to a street in New York's South Bronx which symbolized the crisis of our cities.

What happened since that memorable visit? The *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle* (October 7, 1979) marked the anniversary of that event as follows: "It has been two years now since President Carter stepped out of his black limousine and for ten minutes entered the world of Charlotte Street making it a national symbol of urban blight." And it noted that "the only legacy of President Carter's visit is that the street has been turned into a tourist attraction".

Moreover, in the true spirit of free enterprise "the urban planning department of Hunter College gives a tour of Charlotte Street every other Saturday for \$8.00"! The tour's "attractions" are "1500 vacant buildings in 500 acres of abandoned land" and a poverty-stricken population "35 per cent on welfare".

The San Francisco newspaper quotes Peggy Long, an inhabitant of the street, as angrily protesting the spectacle made of her street. "We are not animals. We are suffering...., this is people's lives."

I can well understand Ms Long's sentiments. It so happened that for a number of years, 1955-58, my family

lived in Charlotte Street. Two of our sons went to P.S. 61, the school on that street. We witnessed the steady, unchecked decay of Charlotte Street and many more like it. As the *Examiner and Chronicle* points out, landlords were permitted by the city administration to neglect their buildings to the point of decay.

New York Mayor Edward Koch visited the same neighborhood in the spring of 1979. And what did the Mayor tell the poverty-stricken residents of this urban hell? Mr. Koch said: "We don't have the money!"

Claiming city poverty, Koch demanded the closing of four hospitals that serve the poor. For the same reasons, he dismissed thousands of teachers, hospital and sanitation workers, librarians and laborers. For the Mayor had to solve the question of how to pay off the huge debt the city owed its creditors, the big banks! As everyone knows, the biggest city in the richest country in the world, the financial capital of world capitalism, has been on the verge of bankruptcy. What matters Charlotte Street and a thousand Charlotte Streets when that holy of holies of free enterprise, Interest Payments, are at stake. From 11 to 12 per cent of New York City's budget (with the rise in interest rates even higher now), as much as is spent on health and medical needs, goes to pay the interest on loans from the big banks.

If New York teeters on the brink of bankruptcy, Cleveland, another great city, has gone beyond the brink. It committed the unpardonable free enterprise crime: it defaulted on its interest payments to the banks.

Another U.S. city, Oakland, California, faces the same serious budget crisis. But business in this city, a great port, is booming. However, the powerful financial interests controlling the port are not obliged to contribute a dollar to the city.

One could say a great deal about similar cities. This is the reality. U.S. cities are powerless to deal with the ever-deepening crisis and the only thing they can do is to agree to banker-dictated terms. In effect, this means permanent crisis-living for the mass of the people.

Soviet cities do not face such problems. No Moscow correspondent from U.S. can point to a single Charlotte Street anywhere in the USSR. Yet 25 million were left

homeless after the devastation wrought by the Nazi invasion. Minsk provides a dramatic example of "working democracy".

It was in the center of the Nazi storm. A city of 240,000 just before the invasion, Minsk was reduced to 40,000 in 1944. A considerable part of the city lay in ashes. Many of its inhabitants were compelled to live in caves.

It takes little imagination for Americans to realize what a field-day our real estate speculators and banks would enjoy with such a "tight" housing situation and ideal "sellers' market"! New Minsk, population 1,300,000, is not only reborn. Unlike South Bronx, Minsk has no scenes of devastation. One of the Soviet Union's most beautiful, it is a city of clean, wide, tree-lined streets and neat, trim modern apartments, houses (nine-storey) and burgeoning industrial complexes in the surrounding areas. Minsk is a Soviet electronic engineering center and the home of the world-famous 100-120-ton trucks and excellent Belarus tractors. It's a city of science and culture.

I visited Minsk before, in 1969. Its wounds had long been healed. Now, a decade later, it seemed to have acquired new vigor. New residential districts with the typical complexes of apartment buildings, stores, polyclinics, nurseries, cinemas, and Palaces of Culture had arisen. As in Moscow, the new housing was much more attractive than the earlier buildings constructed hastily to meet the desperate need of homeless people. Members of the Executive Committee of the Minsk City Soviet explained to me that the City Soviet of People's Deputies at one time worked out its long-term plan for construction. Since the land is all state property, Minsk had no real estate speculators to contend with. Neither did the City Soviet face the problem of dealing with private construction companies and contractors who would certainly make use of their advantageous position.

Minsk, like all Soviet cities, had huge construction organizations which were supplied with prefabricated slabs built along assembly-line methods. Their work is under permanent control of the City Soviet.

However, that was and is only part of the City Soviet's job. It has to organize a just distribution of the apartments. In our free enterprise society distribution is in the hands of

big landlords and real estate firms. Ability to pay skyrocketing rents, not need determines who gets the housing.

It took time for things to adjust themselves. Many Minsk citizens had to wait many years for their own apartment. They waited patiently because they knew that the neediest had to be taken care of first. Moreover, they knew their turn would come in proper order. The listing of that order is publicly displayed at the offices of all City Soviets. Most of the population receive their apartments free of charge. Those who want to receive an apartment earlier or have one with more living space must pay for that themselves—they buy a cooperative apartment.

"And what about funds to provide the housing?" I asked.

In the main it comes from the state, was the answer. The City Soviet gets its revenue not only from the enterprises under its direct control. It also shares in the profits of the All-Union and republican enterprises. Minsk, for example, in 1979 received 20.6 per cent of the tax on the revenue of Union and republican enterprises in its territory. The percentage differs from year to year depending on the increase in the economy and the city's needs.

There may be and are differences in determining the exact amount and needs but this never becomes a serious bone of contention. The differences are resolved on the basis of the USSR's overall plans and needs. The Five-Year Plans, as I explained earlier, at all stages involve the requirements of the cities, villages and Republics.

I asked the members of Minsk's City Soviet Executive Committee whether their city ever was on the verge of bankruptcy. They stared at me incredulously. I, indeed, felt like the proverbial visitor from Mars. Finally, the head of the Planning and Budget Commission, an economist who works for Horizont, a T.V. and radio association, replied: "The entire country would have to go bankrupt for this to happen to us." I asked if Minsk ever had to close or curtail schools, hospitals, libraries, and nurseries and dismiss thousands of teachers, and other public workers. This time my hosts simply smiled. More, not less—this determines the life of Soviet cities.

Minsk can plan its future, since its source of finances is based on the steady economic growth of the cities, Republics and the USSR. It is developing according to a Master Plan up to the year 2000, in which all the main goals are envisioned: population, industrial growth, housing construction, parks, cultural and educational establishments, sports and recreational facilities.

Of the 30 Deputies who make up the Planning and Budget Commission, 10 are specialists and 20 are workers from the city's plants. The combination of experts in particular fields and workers in production provides the proper balance. The grassroots experience of workers complements to the expertise of the specialists.

Bankruptcy may sound ludicrous in Minsk or Moscow but it is hardly a laughable matter to the inhabitants of U.S. cities. Minsk city leaders may regard the very idea of hospitals, schools and libraries and nurseries being closed down with ironic smiles. However, these are sad realities in the U.S. These are vital questions of debate in our City Councils and State Capitols which have become battlegrounds around these issues.

Our City Councils, indeed, appear like a mad, mad world to Soviet City Deputies. This was indicated in the reaction of Boris Martynenko, vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Bauman District Soviet, one of Moscow's 31 districts. While visiting the U.S. in early October 1979, Martynenko attended a meeting of San Francisco's supervisors in City Hall. On that day, the supervisors were debating a proposed rent control initiative. Representatives of powerful landlords' associations were present to speak against rent control. Tenants had just received new savage rent increases ranging as high as 50 and 60 per cent. Rent of three-room apartments jumped to as high as \$400-\$500 a month.

These figures alone must have indeed appeared astronomical to Martynenko. Rent in the USSR averages around 3 per cent of a family's income.

But what puzzled Martynenko even more was that in face of such a critical situation there was a debate on whether to control rent. In the Soviet Union rent has not

only been controlled for six decades but has not even been changed. The government subsidizes it so that tenants pay only one-third of the maintenance cost.

The Moscow and the Minsk City Soviets (the activities of which I have already spoken about) and the district Soviets of these and other Soviet cities know they will get sufficient funds to meet their needs. And needs are determined not through conflict and competition with other cities but on the basis of planning (the same secret) which takes into consideration the growth of the economy and the needs of the people of the entire Soviet Union.

CHAPTER XVI

CITIES AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

In no U.S. city does there exist neighborhood levels of government, least of all on the mass scale of Soviet cities. In fact, on this score there simply is no comparison. Though our City Councils are somewhat more representative than in Congress and on occasion one finds some workers (especially in large industrial cities where trade unions are politically active) the representation here, too, is largely composed of lawyers and businessmen. In no U.S. city or town is there anything faintly comparable to the grassroots participation of the citizenry in the USSR.

However, it is not only the impressive mass involvement that is characteristic of Soviet participatory democracy. Deputies are by law required to publicly report on their work to their constituents at least twice a year (this is in addition to monthly meetings with constituents). The implementation of the mandates and information on their implementation is provided for by Article 102 of the USSR Constitution.

The accounting is hardly a matter of rhetoric so familiar to US citizens.

Few things are wider than the gap between election promises and post-election performance in the U.S. The struggle for carrying out election pledges begins the day after election and never ceases. Energy and activity which in the USSR goes into carrying out the mandates—building homes, schools, hospitals, nurseries, polyclinics, cultural and sports centers—in our cities is expended in exhaustive struggles around City Hall, the State Capitols and Washington. Even modest social gains can only be maintained at the price of bitter battles against the powerful reactionary forces constantly attacking them. With the

first signs of economic recession, welfare measures, won in protracted struggle, come under sharp assault. Thus, in the U.S. the struggle for democratic rights is just that, a bitter and unceasing fight to maintain them.

From 1936 to the present more than 22 million Soviet citizens have served as Deputies. Today, there are 2,300,000 Deputies, the overwhelming majority of them functioning in more than 50,000 City, District, and Village Soviets. No nation, including the U.S., can match this record of participatory democracy.

Take Minsk, again, for example.

The Minsk Soviet Executive Committee consists of 15 people. In order to involve more people and guide the work at the point of production, the political structure goes deeper. Thus, Minsk is divided into 9 administrative districts. Each has its District Soviet. The District Soviet as well as the City Soviet also has its commissions on housing, health, consumer goods, education, youth, culture, environment, etc., which carry out the same functions on their level.

As for Moscow, it has 31 districts and thus, 31 District (neighborhood) Soviets. On the average, each District Soviet has 300 Deputies. Thus, Moscow is directed by more than 9,000 elected representatives (about 10,000 including the Moscow City Soviet). The District Soviet Executive Committee meets weekly. The District Soviet meets four times a year. The commissions, which involve not only Deputies but activists of the Soviets, are functioning all year round.

Or take Grodno, a city considerably smaller than Minsk or Moscow. I met with the members of the Executive Committee of the Grodno City Soviet and received this picture of its set-up. Grodno, population 200,000, has 364 Deputies. Almost half are women (170) and close to two-thirds (221) are workers and almost 70 per cent (285) are newly-elected. One of the main characteristics of Soviet working democracy is the large number of people involved in decision-making and implementation. Involved are not only the Deputies but a huge army of local citizens participating in street and house committees, public organizations, women's and youth associations.

Zhodino, Byelorussia. New heavy-duty BelAZ trucks.

●
Lenin Avenue in Minsk, capital of Byelorussia.



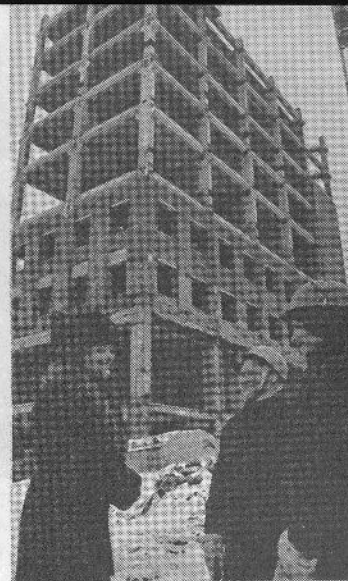


A meeting of the Commission for Youth Affairs of the Minsk Soviet of People's Deputies presided over by its chairman, Rimma Pionova.

Olga Dedyulya, a Deputy to the Minsk City Soviet, talking to builders of a students' dormitory of the Byelorussian State University.

•

1977. Members of the Executive Committee of the Minsk City Soviet discuss the building of a square in the Zavodskoy District in Minsk. In the centre—its Chairman Mikhail Kovalyov.





Ogulgyuzel Taganova, a pensioner, was for 25 years. Chairman of the Soviet of the village of Bagir in Turkmenia. She still takes an active part in the social life of the village. Top left: the present Chairman of the Village Soviet Mivat Rustamov; bottom: Chairman of the Village Soviet M. Rustamov, Secretary of the Soviet Baimukhammed Meredov and Ogulgyuzel Taganova.



The Ilyich Collective Farm in Uzbekistan. Chairman of the farm Sagdi Rakhmatulayev.



Pavel Rogov, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of People's Deputies in the town of Volkovysk.



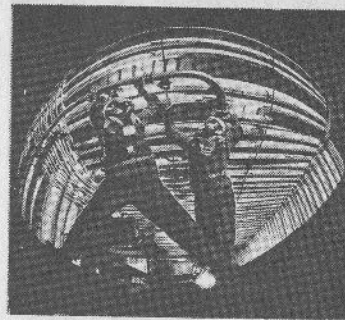
Grigori Litvak, a Deputy to the City Soviet, is manager of the local dairy plant.



The dairy plant in Volkovysk.



Rescue team members repairing the air feeding system in a mine in Donetsk.



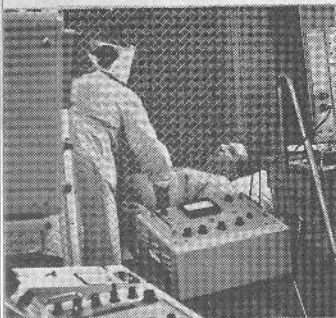
Checking the purity of air in a mine.

A miner having a medical checkup.



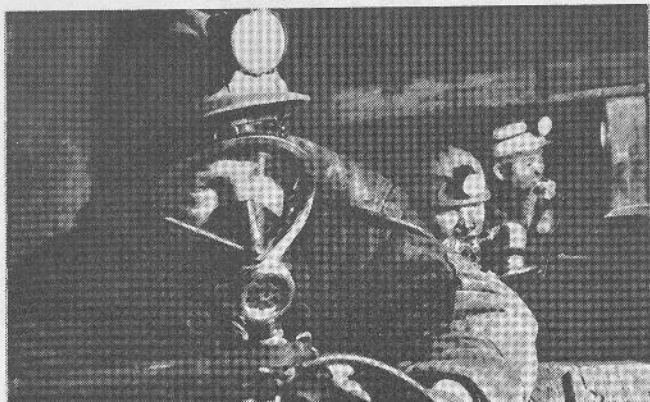


A mine rescue team undergoing practical training in fighting mine fires.



A cardiological room in a clinic specializing in the prevention of occupational diseases.

Rescue team members having practical training in a training mine in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.



New York City Council illustrates the contrast that exists between Soviet and U.S. city governments. Consider the composition of the City Council of New York. According to the information supplied me January 25, 1980 by Joseph M. Fitzpatrick, its Public Information Officer, of the 43 members 20 are lawyers (6 inactive), 6 are business people (3 former) and one is in real estate business. In other words, 27 of the 43 (more than 60 per cent) are lawyers or business people. Only one is below 35 years of age. Nine, or little more than 20 per cent, are women. This reflects the advances made in recent years at the local level in politics as a result of the women's struggle for their rights.

There are five Black and three Hispanic members (little less than 20 per cent) among the members of the City Council of New York. Together the two minority groups make up more than 40 per cent of the population. There is not a single garment worker in the New York City Council although New York is the nation's center of the needle trades industries. Nor is there one longshoreman or seaman although it is one of the world's great ports. Not one office worker although it is a world center of finance and the home office of the nation's largest corporations. New York City Council members are paid \$30,000 a year. In addition they are allotted money for their staff and other expenses linked with their duties. Unlike the City Soviet which combines executive and legislative powers, the New York City Council (as all such local bodies in the U.S.) deals almost solely with legislation. The Board of Estimate, which includes five Borough Presidents, and the Mayor, is the chief administrative body. Executive power is largely wielded by the Mayor.

Foreign delegations visiting the Soviet Union often ask what the difference is between a local Soviet and a municipality in a capitalist country. A municipality is no more than an organ of self-government, whereas a Soviet is an organ of state power as well as an organ of state administration. A Soviet is not under any administrative patronage; it decides independently all matters within its jurisdiction. All executive bodies in the territory which is under the authority of a Soviet are formed by that Soviet,

be it militia, the public health department or the board of agriculture or trade. The main feature distinguishing a Soviet from a municipality is that a Soviet is the *absolute master of its territory*.

In May 1979 I attended a meeting of the City Soviet of Bekabad, an important industrial town not far from Tashkent. Bekabad, population 70,000, has a City Soviet of 175 Deputies, 85 of whom are women and 106 workers. Its Executive Committee meets twice a month.

It so happened it was meeting late afternoon, the day I visited Bekabad. The members of the executive committee were grouped around a long elliptically-shaped table. Seated in the large room of the City Hall were about 75 people. These included Deputies, directors, heads of cultural and educational institutions and leaders of public organizations. Akpomajan Ibabekov, the chairman of the City Executive (Mayor), presided. A swarthy, wiry, handsome man in his late 30s, Ibabekov was a cement worker who was elected to his post two years ago. He conducted the meeting in a businesslike manner.

I had read the agenda and it was the first point, check-up on the city plan, that particularly interested me. The reason for the presence of so many directors of enterprises became clear. They had been summoned to publicly account on how they had fulfilled the goals set for their enterprises in the plan adopted by the City Soviet. Present also were members of the press so that tomorrow's newspapers, T.V. and radio would carry their reports.

One by one Ibabekov called upon directors to account. Reading from the city plan, he cited the concrete goals that had been adopted. The discussions and debates had taken place prior to the adoption of the goals.

The first to be called was the director of a construction organization, who had to account for the construction of a sports complex. The director reported on the work done thus far which seemed to meet the targets set. Ibabekov then asked him: "Will it be completed by November 7?" Final goals are frequently set in accordance with important dates. The director paused, thought a moment, then stated that he was confident the target date would be met. The secretary of the executive committee made a note of

the pledge. It was evident that all in the hall, including the director, understood how binding the commitment was.

The next to report was the head of the cement factory where Ibabekov had recently worked. The director had to account on the building of new additions to the plant's Young Pioneers' camp for the children of the workers. He had met his targets. Thus there were no questions from those seated in the hall.

However, he was followed by the head of a repair and maintenance organization, who reported that his outfit would be 15 days late in meeting the goals. Ibabekov shook his head. "That's bad," he said staring at the director. The floor was thrown open to questions and remarks. However, unlike in our City Council sessions, there was very little speech making. One accustomed to the politicking and playing to the gallery in our City Halls would be disappointed. The questions were brief and pointed as were the comments. The maintenance director sweated a bit. The 15 days of grace granted constituted a public rebuke.

The director of the bread factory was the final reporter. He noted that the plan for planting 3,000 trees in the area adjacent to the factory had been met. There were nods of approval in the hall. This goal was quite easy for Bakabad citizens to check.

The power of the Soviets as "absolute master of its territory" is revealed again in their relationship with the plants and enterprises in their area. All appointments of managers or directors are subject to the approval of the City Soviet. Minsk, for example, had a pollution problem a few years ago with one of the plants. The director, also a member of the City Soviet, was called to account much as was done in Bekabad. He took the necessary steps to correct the situation.

"And what if he had failed to do so?" I asked. I was told that at first there would be a reprimand, followed by a sharper reprimand and finally request for his dismissal. The City Soviet cannot directly dismiss the head of an enterprise but its request for such action is usually complied with.

Here is another example. The Soviet Constitution states

that consumer goods are controlled by the local Soviets in the area where they are produced. I asked the Minsk Executive members how the city implements that power. They gave the following explanation. Each ministry informs the City Soviet of the plan for each plant. The plan and its implementation is coordinated between the ministry and the local Soviet. The Soviet, which by its very nature has the closest contact with the people, the consumers, in a way acts as a consumers' control committee. The system, as may easily be seen, works efficiently.

The City Soviet also has a powerful voice in deciding what plants should or should not be constructed in its territory. Minsk has a particular problem in this respect. Its working population is already so fully involved in the huge industries in the city that it has little of a reservoir of labor to draw upon. Hence, it has advised against any further construction of large plants in the city area. It has set up limits on the type and character of future enterprises. No ministry can build any enterprises in the territory under the city's jurisdiction without the approval of the City Soviet. The City Soviet also supervises and checks on how safety is maintained in all enterprises, how the need for nurseries, Young Pioneers' camps, polyclinics, institutes, Palaces of Culture and clubs for the workers of the plants is met.

The members of the City Soviets of Minsk and all the other cities I visited listened with sympathy to my account of the constant struggle between the big industry polluters and the people. "No such struggle is possible in our cities," they pointed out. "Not only because we have no monopolies to contend with. The directors, trade union leaders and workers of these plants are members of the City Soviet. And the director knows that he has to account for everything, especially in matters concerning the health and safety of the people."

Moreover, Soviet law provides that no enterprise can be put into operation before the necessary measures against pollution have been taken. All plants must pass rigorous inspection in this respect by City Soviet committees. Power is also exercised through the year-round work of the standing commissions.

How this is done was indicated to me when I met with the sub-committee of Minsk's Youth Commission which happened to be in session during my discussion with the City Soviet Executive members.

The sub-committee was headed by Rimma Pionova, director of the Research Institute of Professional Training. It included Olga Bedjula, teacher of Russian language and literature, and Valentina Kolosova, a post-graduate student of a pedagogical college. Pionova heads the Youth Commission of 30 members. The sub-committee was examining the situation in the hostels of the large technological institute in Minsk. Pionova noted that of the five hostels two provided excellent conditions—comfortable sleeping quarters, a good library, rest, recreation, cultural and sports facilities. Three others which were built in a hurry right after the war were adequate but not up to date and did not provide sufficiently for the best use of students' free time. The sub-committee drew up concrete proposals for improving conditions.

But the biggest problem with which the sub-committee was now concerned was that 15 to 20 per cent of the students did not live in the hostels since there was not yet enough rooms to accommodate them. "We learned that one more hostel will be built in accordance with proposals for the 11th Five-Year Plan to be adopted next year," Pionova informed me. Thus, the sub-committee concerned itself with the problem of speeding up the construction of an additional hostel. The Youth Commission must pass on recommendations to the City Soviet Executive Committee for immediately drawing up plans for such a hostel.

"Will another hostel be built?" I asked. "Why, of course," Pionova replied without hesitation as the others nodded agreement. "All students must be accommodated in our hostels." It was all stated matter-of-factly. The members of the City Executive agreed. The only question that had to be worked out was the definite target dates.

I told the Youth Commission members that U.S. youth could hardly speak with the same assurance and authority. I informed them that aside from having to pay as high as \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year for tuition in private colleges and

universities, students were facing a critical situation in respect to skyrocketing rents.

The *San Francisco Examiner*, August 27, 1979, in an article headed, "A Student Panic—the Annual Rush for Housing Is On," noted that "a three-room bedroom place that rented for \$375 last fall now goes for \$425 to \$450". Soviet students not only do not pay any rent or tuition, they receive stipends from the government.

The dictionary defines democracy as "government by the people". In every respect the City Soviets meet that test far better than our city government.

Modern urban life presents one of the greatest challenges to any society. The deepening crisis of capitalist cities (and of the cities in the West particularly) reflects that "free enterprise" society is failing miserably to meet that challenge. It is particularly in the crisis of cities that the undemocratic character of monopoly rule is demonstrated. And, conversely, it is in the flourishing nature of Soviet cities that the genuinely democratic character of the Soviet socialist system is displayed.

CHAPTER XVII

THE "JOYS" OF TWO-PARTY DEMOCRACY

A review of the 1968 election returns reveals some important facts concerning manipulations of the U.S. two-party system.

1968 was no ordinary year. It marked a watershed in the political life of the U.S. It was the year of political assassinations, ghetto rebellions and massive demonstrations against the dirty war in Vietnam. It was the year millions of U.S. voters attempted to use the elections to change disastrous course along which the President and Congress were leading the nation. As a political reporter for the *Daily World* I was an eyewitness to these climactic events. The 1968 elections put our much vaunted democracy and particularly our two-party system to a severe test. For the real test of democracy, whether it is reflected in two, multiple or a single party system is: *how does government respond to the will of the people?*

Two massive movements of the 60s—for full freedom of the Black people and for peace—were uniting into a powerful current. This significant development was signaled in the historic speech of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4, 1967, at the Riverside Church in New York. King warned prophetically: "If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must be Vietnam."

A year later, on April 4, 1968, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Many believe that speech sealed his doom. The murder of King triggered upheavals in ghettos of more than 100 cities. More than 29 Blacks were killed, 2,000 injured and 10,000 arrested. More than 60,000 National Guardsmen patrolled the streets of Washington and scores of other cities. The assassination of King had a profound effect on the crucial 1968 Presidential elections already under way.

In December 1967 the movement to challenge the war and the foreign policy of President Johnson developed within the Democratic Party. Senator Eugene McCarthy, Democrat from Minnesota, announced that he would oppose President Johnson in the forthcoming primaries. For the first time in more than half a century a President faced a challenge within his own Party.

The challenge was motivated by these factors. The strong opposition to the war had begun to affect influential forces within the Democratic Party. There was a growing fear that the anti-war movement, which was increasingly assuming militant form, would get out of hand. The war was undermining confidence in the political system, especially among the youth. McCarthy himself reflected this concern when he stated that he regarded his candidacy as helping to restore to many people a belief in the processes of American politics and of the American government. On March 12, McCarthy, then a political unknown, polled 42 per cent of the vote in the Democratic primary in New Hampshire which had been regarded as a "hawkish" state. A voter uprising against the war in Vietnam and President Johnson was in the making. Shortly afterwards President Johnson announced his withdrawal as candidate for re-election. On April 2, McCarthy amassed 57 per cent of the vote in the Democratic primary in Wisconsin. It underscored the rebellion that had compelled Johnson's withdrawal.

McCarthy's success and Johnson's capitulation brought Senator Robert Kennedy into the race. The Kennedy machine was linked with forces in the very top echelons of the Democratic Party. The movement around McCarthy had more of a genuine grassroots character. Thus, it was more difficult to control.

The better organized and financed Kennedy campaign assumed the leadership of the rebellion. The prospect of an alliance of these two powerful movements alarmed the dominant monopoly forces who controlled both major parties. It threatened their policy of pursuing the war in Vietnam and posed a serious challenge to their hand-picked candidate in the Democratic Convention, Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey.

On June 5, on the eve of his decisive victory in California, Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. For the second time in a period of two months, political assassination interrupted the elections. Massive violence was unleashed in the ghettos and universities. Many were killed and wounded. Thousands were arrested. An armed camp atmosphere was beginning to engulf the country. Though seriously affected by these blows, the struggles continued to mount. The focal point became the Democratic Nominating Convention scheduled for August 29 in Chicago. Earlier, in August, the Republican Convention in Miami had chosen Richard Nixon for President and Spiro Agnew for Vice President. Both guaranteed vigorous prosecution of the war in Vietnam and a mailed fist against resistance at home. The military-industrial complex turned its attention to its other party.

The party machinery had the Convention in hand. The votes if not the enthusiasm were guaranteed. With a Nixon-Humphrey match in November the military-industrial complex couldn't lose.

However, with the massive discontent growing rapidly throughout the country, the dominant forces in the Democratic Party were determined to take no chances. The same kind of fear of mass discontent that was to motivate Nixon in 1972 to organize the ill-fated Watergate conspiracy led the leaders of the Democratic Party to turn their 1968 Convention into an armed camp. The *Chicago Convention of 1968 was the Democratic Watergate*. It reflected the same brutal disregard for democratic rights as did Nixon's Watergate conspiracy.

The choice of Chicago was no accident. Few could better qualify for the job of sealing off the Convention from its constituency than Mayor Richard "Boss" Daley. "Boss" Daley transformed the International Amphitheater, the site of the Convention, and Chicago itself, into Fort Daley. Its perimeter and entrance were ringed with barbed wire. Blue-helmeted, pistol-bulging police were stationed every few hundred yards, behind them stood silent men in mufti, their stony eyes scrutinizing the delegates who had come to nominate a candidate for the President of the United States. To enter this armed camp they had to place their

credential tags into an electronic slot which lit up when it was properly verified. FBI agents snapped their pictures from every angle. Inside the convention hall, there were more guards. Movement was largely restricted to prescribed areas, making normal contact among the delegates difficult.

Outside, thousands of heavily armed, gas-masked troops of the National Guard augmented Daley's police. Daley's "stormtroopers" conducted a bloody vendetta against newsmen and photographers. Peace demonstrators who had come from all over the U.S. were savagely assaulted.

The night of the nomination was a night of terror. Humphrey received his nomination over the broken heads of hundreds of peace demonstrators. The three presidential candidates witnessed the ghastly scene from their windows in the Conrad Hilton Hotel. The bloodstained sidewalk and the street near the hotel were strewn with the wreckage of shoes, hats, scarfs, eyeglasses and books. A room on the 15th floor of the Hilton was transformed into a front-line first aid station by horrified members of McCarthy's staff. Many of McCarthy's supporters were manhandled.

The "powers-that-be" had achieved their aim. U.S. voters were presented a "choice" between two candidates both of whom were committed to continuing the dirty war in Vietnam.

The real power behind both parties demonstrated how far they will go to change even the rules of their fixed game when their aggressive policies are threatened. The Democratic and Republican Parties are opportunistic alliances of diverse and even contending interests. The glue that binds them (particularly during elections) is their common goal: to win and retain office.

However, they are above all instruments for implementing the domestic and foreign policies of monopoly capital. In critical moments, there is no question which aim takes precedence. It was this overriding interest that compelled President Johnson to persist in waging the war in Vietnam in face of the overwhelming opposition of the people. His "principled" defense of the interests of U.S. imperialism cost him his landslide support won in 1964 and forced him to withdraw in 1968.

For the same reasons, the leaders of the Democratic Party were prepared to turn their Convention into an armed camp and even face defeat at the polls in 1968.

It is important to review the events of the crucial year 1968 because much of the present acknowledged crisis of confidence can be traced to the bitter lessons learned by millions of Americans during that year. Millions of American youth who had been taught the eternal virtues and unquestioned superiority of our "democracy" had their illusions shattered on the rock of reality. Trapped by the two-party set-up, millions are voting with their feet moving away from the polls. Dwindling participation in the elections (though it objectively surrenders political rule to monopoly) constitutes a devastating indictment of U.S. democracy. More and more the U.S. ruling class is ruling by default.

The two-party trap makes it extremely difficult for the American people to express their wishes. Manipulations by a controlled press only tighten the trap. Rarely had any ruling class devised a system of political rule which so overwhelmingly stacks the deck in their favor while at the same time retaining the illusion of a "fair" game.

An important element in creating that illusion is the carnival-like atmosphere of the elections. No elections in the world are as protracted as in the U.S. A President spends from one to two years of his four-year term running for re-election. Often the White House itself is the real campaign headquarters. Politics has long superseded statesmanship in the White House. The decay of the social system is reflected in the degeneration of the political process itself. Even staunch defenders of the bourgeois political system are becoming increasingly aware of and alarmed by the increasing unstable and adventurist character of U.S. policies, particularly in foreign affairs.

The U.S. ruling class spares no effort or expense to create the illusion of intense interest, excitement and mass involvement in general elections. In sheer words and noise U.S. elections have no peers. Nevertheless, an ever-increasing number are refusing to participate in the "democratic" process. A *New York Times* survey (February 1, 1976) noted: "From a modern peak of 63 in 1960 voter

turnout slipped below 62 per cent in 1964, under 61 per cent in 1968 to 55 per cent in 1972 (in Presidential years, *M.D.*). Turnout in mid-term Congressional elections, always lower than in Presidential years, fell from a modern high of 46 per cent in 1962 to 36 per cent in 1974, the lowest since 1942, and outside the South where newly registered Blacks raised the totals, the *lowest in more than a century*" (My emphasis, *M.D.*).

The New York Times predicted that in 1976 "as many as half of the roughly 150 million eligible voters in the country will declare by not voting that they *see no choice worth bothering to exercise*" (My emphasis, *M.D.*). Its prediction proved to be accurate.

In respect to primary elections the picture is even more dismal. It is in the primaries that Democratic and Republican voters are supposed to be exercising their choice of *nominating* the party's candidate. It is here that the U.S. press particularly proclaims the *superiority* of the U.S. electoral process. Yet, few choose to exercise that "right".

The syndicated political columnist, David S. Broder (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 19, 1977) declared: "In 1976, more Presidential primaries than ever were held, offering more people the chance for a personal voice in the selection of Presidential candidates. Unfortunately, most people looked at the opportunity and said *no thanks*" (My emphasis, *M.D.*).

The veteran political columnist, TRB, estimated the number participating in primaries as "about one in six or about 16 per cent" of those eligible to vote.

Thus the political chart in the U.S. reads as follows:

Almost one-half do not participate in electing a President.

Almost two-thirds refuse to take part in congressional elections.

About 84 per cent will have nothing to do with choosing the nominees of the two major parties.

What is this but an expression of profound disillusionment with our electoral process?

The situation has alarmed many astute U.S. political scientists. Political Science Professor Walter Dean

Burnham of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology characterizes it as "active alienation" from the electoral process. (*The New York Times*, February 1, 1976).

The grim reality is that with all its claims to being the world's model of democracy, the leading political bodies in the U.S. are in fact representatives of a *minority* of the population. The mass abstention from the electoral process has long gone beyond mere indifference. It increasingly constitutes a *vote of no-confidence in the present electoral system*, a rejection of the "heads I win tails you lose" choice offered the voters by the power brokers.

Money, as Americans know, not only talks, it *buys*. And Big Business is buying candidates more boldly than ever. *The Wall Street Journal* (September 11, 1978) noted: "Corporate PACs (political action committees, *M.D.*)... now number nearly 700 compared with fewer than 100 four years ago. They are teaching a lot of politicians from both parties the *joys of corporate giving*" (My emphasis, *M.D.*).

The bipartisan character of the "giving" is demonstrated by the almost equal division of the funds between the two major parties (54 per cent went to the Democratic Party, according to the newspaper.) *The Wall Street Journal* points out that the "giving" has nothing to do with political preference. It states that "business usually prefers to play things safe with those holding power".

Demagogy plays a significant role in creating the illusion of free choice and in maintaining the two-party system. Nowhere has demagogy been raised to the "fine art" it is in U.S. politics.

The American people have suffered a succession of Presidents who turned out to be "not the Presidents" they expected them "to be". Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Carter, just to name a few. Indeed, rarely has any U.S. President in modern times turned out to be the kind of President he was expected to be. The awesome gap between *raised expectations and disillusioning reality has created a crisis of confidence which has become a permanent feature of U.S. political life*.

The disillusionment is increasingly assuming the form of mass frustration. The two-party system historically has proved to be a trap that is extremely difficult to break out

of. Theoretically, the doors are supposed to be wide open for the formation of third or independent parties. However, both legally and in reality the situation is quite different. Though a growing number of registered voters (about 40 per cent at present) regard themselves as independents, a maze of regulations stand between them and a breakaway from the two major parties.

The regulations governing elections and the formation of independent political parties are not prescribed by federal law. Nor are they contained in the U.S. Constitution as in the Soviet Constitution. They are the province of the 50 states. The net result is that the path toward formation of independent or minority parties and running candidates is a virtual mine field.

Particularly severe restrictions (augmented by outright repression in many states) are imposed on the Communist Party. Communism and Communists are portrayed as beyond the very pale of legitimate consideration. Socialism is one alternative that the U.S. ruling class excludes from serious and objective discussion and debate. As Simon Gerson, campaign manager for Gus Hall and Angela Davis, Communist candidates for President and Vice-President, respectively, points out in 1932 Communist votes were recorded in 38 out of 48 states. In 1972, however, primarily because of legal restrictions, Communist candidates achieved ballot status in only 13 out of the 50 states.

Gerson describes how the rights of the Communist Party to participate in elections and the right of the people to vote for them are obstructed and denied. "Twelve states have outright anti-Communist provisions. Delaware, for example, requires that the Communist Party and its members register with the state police. Louisiana demands an anti-Communist affidavit of candidates. Georgia has an anti-subversive clause under which election officials can blandly deny ballot status to Communist candidates."

But these hardly constitute all the restrictions imposed on Communists and minority parties. Onerous signature requirements must be met in many states. California, for example, requires 100,000 signatures. In Massachusetts and at least ten other states signatures must first be submitted to town or county clerks or probate judges. At least four

states—Louisiana, Missouri, Tennessee and Virginia—require one elector from each Congressional district. And as Gerson correctly points out, "For a Communist elector from a bayou district of Louisiana merely to appear on the ballot is an act of considerable courage." Communist canvassers have also met threats of violence and arrests.

These then are the grim realities of U.S. politics that need to be borne in mind. They hardly qualify the U.S. press to proclaim our electoral process as a model of democracy or our Moscow correspondents to disparage the Soviet system of elections and party-people relations. On the contrary, we could profit from an objective look at Soviet *working* democracy and comparing it to U.S. *talking* democracy.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHOM DOES A VOTER VOTE FOR?

Our description of the democratic system in the USSR would not be full if we did not dwell, in however general a way, on the Soviet electoral system. The U.S. press ridicules Soviet elections because almost the entire adult population (more than 99 per cent) participates in the balloting. The subject of criticism is that only one candidate stands for each office. The distortions of our news media and their own unfamiliarity with the electoral process of a social system based on cooperative *non-antagonistic* classes, has made it difficult for most Americans to comprehend Soviet elections. I believe, in the interests of objectivity, one must rid oneself of the notion that *two* is the magic number in respect to the electoral process. Democracy is not a numbers game. If democracy is to be judged by the number of parties in a country then why stop at *two*?

The Soviet electoral system evolved from the historical developments in the past six decades as well as the pre-revolutionary period of political struggle. That is why I felt the reader would be in a better position to understand the Soviet electoral system *after* becoming acquainted with the development of the Soviets and the role they (as well as the Communist Party) have played and continue to play in Soviet life.

During my six years in the USSR I observed the Soviet system of elections in operation. During the 1970 elections of Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet, I witnessed all stages from the initial stage in late April to June 16, the day voters went to the polls. I saw all this in the Frunze district of Moscow where I lived with my family.

I had heard that a meeting was to be held in late April in the famous Botkin hospital to nominate a candidate for

Deputy to the Soviet of the Union. Earlier our family had become familiar and impressed with the medical competence of the Botkin hospital. Our son, Joseph, became ill and was successfully treated there. By the way free of charge, like everyone else in the USSR.

In preparation for the meeting in the Botkin hospital, a conference was held. Present were representatives of trade union committees, the Communist Party and the Komsomol, and activists from among the hospital staff. At this conference nominations were carefully considered and discussed. The merits and qualifications of a number of possible candidates were weighed before Dr. Galina Butsenina's name was decided upon as the nominee to be approved by the general meeting.

On the day of nomination the large auditorium was crowded. About 1,000 members of the hospital staff were present. These included famous doctors as well as nurses and service workers. Election regulations provide that *for a nomination to be valid, more than half of the collective must be in attendance*. Since 70 per cent of the Soviet doctors are women, I was not surprised to find that the audience was predominantly of that sex.

It was immediately apparent that the preparatory conference had made a popular choice. Dr. Butsenina's nomination was enthusiastically greeted. Dr. Butsenina was head of the Department of Neurology and it was clear from the remarks of several speakers who took the floor to support her nomination (and from the reaction of the audience) that she was highly respected. Butsenina has worked at the Botkin hospital for 15 years and she is not a member of the Communist Party. What struck me was how well Butsenina's future constituents knew her. They had watched her grow into one of the most highly respected and loved members of the staff. Her colleagues reviewed Butsenina's years of service. They commented not only on her professional qualifications but on her relations with her patients. Galina Butsenina had served as a member of the Frunze District Soviet and had distinguished herself by her diligent and conscientious work.

The floor was open to anyone who wanted to oppose her nomination. Butsenina's candidacy could have been re-

jected by a simple majority vote. In that case, the meeting would have to consider another nominee. However, it was evident that Butsenina was indeed a popular choice. The meeting burst into stormy applause when it was announced that she had been nominated unanimously. However, Butsenina was not yet the candidate of the Frunze district. This was only the first stage.

The second stage took place on May 5. Representatives of many enterprises, institutions and public organizations in the Frunze electoral district (an average district with a population of 300,000) met to decide on the candidate to be presented to voters on June 16. These representatives had participated in meetings in their enterprises and institutions similar to the one I had attended in the Botkin hospital. A number of candidates were considered by the district election conference. At this point, the candidate chosen could have been someone other than Butsenina. However, after due deliberation, the conference agreed upon her. There was nothing to prevent anyone from proposing another candidate or *several* candidates for that matter. There is nothing in the Soviet law which prohibits that.

However, in practice, one candidate is agreed upon. This is not because any pressure is brought to bear upon conference representatives. There is nothing to be gained by such pressure since no special interests are served by the election of any particular deputy. What special privileges could the doctors and workers of the Botkin hospital gain by Butsenina's election? Or the workers of the Watch Factory or the Bolshevik Candy Factory, who supported her nomination? Soviet Deputies do not dispense patronage. The reasons why it is possible to arrive at one candidate are similar to the ones which lie behind the unanimity that characterizes decisions of the Supreme Soviet. Candidates are considered on their merits. This is possible in the Soviet electoral system because there are no *antagonistic classes with conflicting interests in Soviet Society*. Classes still exist but they are *cooperative* classes of working people—workers and farmers—with common interests. Thus, objective consideration and *unanimous* agreement on the best candidate is easy to arrive at.

It goes without saying that no one anywhere can be sure

he will never make mistakes. The candidate chosen may not always prove to be the best. The final test is always in performance. It is here that the accounting is far more strict than in our political system.

Another point to consider in comparing our primaries (and state party caucuses) with the Soviet system of nominating candidates: U.S. primaries are very expensive and the cost is soaring. This is one reason why our U.S. Senate is a "millionaire's club" and most members of the House are very well-to-do. Thus, successful candidates for nomination depend largely on what the *Wall Street Journal* aptly describes as the "joys of corporate giving". Such "joys" are entirely absent from the Soviet electoral process.

Then again, while theoretically anyone can run (this point is particularly stressed by those who uphold our electoral process as more democratic than the Soviet), only those chosen by the inner circle of the two major parties stand any real chance of winning. And in many districts winning the primary designation of one of the two major parties is tantamount to election. These are known as "safe" districts. As Tom Wicker, well-known political columnist, pointed out (*The New York Times*, July 25, 1978), "virtually every member of Congress represents some interest". For instance, representatives from Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, the "oil states", are usually notorious for their support of the powerful "oil interests". Senator Long, Democrat of Louisiana and head of the decisive Senate Finance Committee, has long wielded the pivotal post in behalf of the oil monopolies.

Soviet voters and their nominees during the election campaign are not beset by special interests nor by parties like the two leading parties in the U.S. which are the instruments of interests that are frequently in conflict with the interests of the people. The aims and aspirations of the Soviet people and the CPSU fully coincide. Citizens of the USSR have long accepted the Communist Party as their leader, an acceptance which grew out of their history as I pointed out.

All (with insignificant exceptions) support the socialist system and are working to build communism. All are working to fulfill the five-year plans. All support a foreign

policy of "peace offensives" based on the Moscow summit declaration "that in this nuclear age there is no alternative to peaceful coexistence of differing social systems".

Let me return to the Soviet elections. On June 16, 1970, elections of Deputies to the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet were held throughout the country. I visited the polling booth of the 22nd election district located in the lobby of the Sovetskaya Hotel, a block away from my home.

Voting had begun at 6 a.m. and the polls closed at 12 p.m. A sudden downpour had flooded the streets. Nevertheless, a steady stream of voters continued to arrive. I recalled that 18-year-olds have had the right to vote since the establishment of Soviet power. According to the new Constitution, Soviet citizens reaching the age of 21 are eligible for election to the USSR Supreme Soviet.

That this is no mere formality is indicated by the fact that 21 per cent of the Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet are below 30. As for all other Soviets—from local to republican—a citizen reaching the age of 18 is eligible for election.

The eligibility age for the House of Representatives is 25 and 30 for the U.S. Senate. The archaic seniority system as well as the powers of incumbency make the actual age level considerably higher. As the Ralph Nader study, *Who Runs Congress*, notes (page 48) "there is almost never anyone (House of Representatives, *M.D.*) here under 30". As for the Senate youth are almost completely excluded.

Voting in the Sovetskaya Hotel proceeded smoothly. Unlike in our country where each state prescribes its own regulations, Soviet election rights and procedures are uniform throughout the country. No Union Republic, Autonomous Republic or *oblast* (equivalent to our state) can enact qualifications restricting voting rights (as in the U.S.). Nor are there any residence requirements stipulating the period of time one must live in the city or election district. Nor do Soviet citizens have to register to vote.

One month before election day a list of all citizens permanently or temporarily residing in the district, is put up in the office of the Soviet or at the polling place. Elderly, disabled or hospitalized citizens are given special

assistance so that they can vote. Voters in the Sovetskaya simply took their ballots after their names had been checked, entered the special booths, and there in private they decided: to leave the name of the candidate on the ballot paper or to strike it out. After that they deposited the ballot in a box.

I asked Vsevolod Radzinsky, head of the Central Laboratory of the Moscow Second Watch Factory, who was chairman of the Frunze 22nd Election District Commission, for a ballot. A column next to Butsenina's name listed the factories and institutions which backed her. They included: the Botkin hospital, a scientific research institute, the Watch Factory and the Bolshevik Candy Factory.

Galina Butsenina was elected. However, not always does nomination mean election. In 1980, 77 out of the 2,274,861 candidates running for local Soviets failed to receive a majority of the votes and were not elected. New elections were held. However, this, of course, is rare.

For the next couple of days, the tabulated vote was carried in all newspapers and, as was to be expected, about 99 per cent had participated in the voting. Such a near 100 per cent turnout is, of course, very difficult for most Americans to understand and our press makes the most of it. Why would almost the entire Soviet electorate turn out to vote for only one candidate?

What then is the basic factor determining voter participation? I believe it lies in the answer to the question uppermost in the minds of voters everywhere. Will the representatives I elect act in the interests of the people? Will they truly represent me and act in behalf of my needs?

It is not by chance that non-voting in the U.S. is highest among the poorest, the most oppressed, the minority groups. For it is *above all their needs that are most neglected and disregarded*.

The Soviet people judge the prospects of the future by the accomplishments of the past and the present. All this has bred deep confidence in their political system and the people they elect to lead them.

However, basic though this is, this alone would still be not enough to explain why there is near-unanimous voter

participation. Among other factors, I believe, are the following.

First. The non-professional character of their Deputies, their permanent, intimate contact with the people they represent. The wide gulf, separating the American people from their Representatives and Senators in Congress and elected officials in general, simply does not exist in the Soviet Union.

Second. The ever increasing involvement of Soviet people in the administration of public affairs on all levels. In addition to the 2,200,000 Deputies in more than 50,000 local Soviets, over 30,000,000 activists—about one-ninth of the population—are directly or indirectly involved in the various phases of work led by the Soviets.

Third. The high level of civic consciousness and mass involvement in public affairs are possible not *only* because the channels are wide open. They are possible because the Soviet people, unlike our own, do *not* have to wage a constant struggle against the closing of schools and dismissal of teachers. They do *not* have to fight against the shutting down of hospitals, curtailment of libraries, elimination of bus lines. They do *not* have to contend with racism, mass unemployment and runaway inflation, and sky-high rents. All the tremendous energy, initiative and talent which our capitalist system compels frustrated citizens to expend in a constant battle for sheer existence, are turned toward constructive service for the common good in the Soviet Union.

Not all Soviet citizens are as yet part of this process. Nor are all fully involved. A constant effort is being made to expand the process. But it is the *dominant characteristic of Soviet society today*. This is the chief source of the high level of civic consciousness of the Soviet people.

Fourth. Soviet citizens do not regard voting and electing as separate from the entire process of governing and administering. Choosing the Deputy is only the first step. The Deputy and constituents are both well aware of this. *Accounting* never stops. By their constant check on the people they elect, Soviet citizens play a direct part in the process of the implementation of targets the whole country is pursuing.

All these factors have to be taken into account to understand the attitude of Soviet citizens toward voting. *How could people, so closely involved in planning and fulfillment of Five-Year Plans, and in the administration of public affairs, be indifferent to voting?*

Voting reflects the degree of their involvement in public life. It is part of a continuous process of *this involvement*.

Thus, the following factors have to be considered in estimating the democratic character of the Soviet electoral system and comparing it to our own: the nominating process, the obligations to regularly report back to constituents, the duty to carry out mandates, the right to recall and above all *mass involvement of the people* in the activities of the Soviets. I believe that when one weighs *all* these factors, one will come to the conclusion that in a basic sense the Soviet system is more democratic than the U.S. system.

The electoral process develops on the basis of the specific historical conditions, traditions and needs of a country and its people. Given our traditions and historical development, we would very likely have a multi-party system under a socialist society. Then, too, our electoral system could well be more open and competitive at the nomination stage than is the case with the Soviets. All these matters are related to *form not content* of the electoral process which can, does, and should vary from country to country. The essence of democracy in elections as in life is that *power* must be in the hands of the *people* not the monopolies and that it should be used to bridge the age-old gap between words and deeds.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PRESS AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The Soviet media, so we are frequently told in the West, cannot be a "free" press. That quality, so it would seem, only comes with big business ownership. Since the USSR has no equivalent of a *New York Times* conglomerate or a Hearst chain, it can only have a "controlled" press. "Free" goes with "free enterprise". "Controlled" is synonymous with socialism. It is not my intention to explore this "logic" any further except to note that the Soviet press makes no claim to "impartiality". It leaves such pretensions to the U.S. press.

Perhaps nowhere is the difference in the roles played by the Soviet and U.S. press more sharply contrasted than in their attitude toward and treatment of letters from readers. It is the difference between blowing off steam and acting to eliminate abuses and shortcomings. It is the difference between talking and working democracy.

Take *Izvestia*, organ of the Soviets of People's Deputies of the USSR. I have before me a sheaf of clippings containing more than two hundred letters from readers over a period of three years from 1976 to 1979.

Here is a letter from a group of readers from Kharkov (the Ukraine). It states that judging by figures one would conclude that the City Soviet fulfilled its goals in respect to providing apartments for World War II invalids and the families of those killed. (These are given preference in housing.) The letter notes that by January 1, 1976—1,482 families out of 1,785 received apartments in Kharkov. The City Soviet was 303 apartments short of its goal. But, it desperately wanted to achieve it. So what did it do? It gave 303 families the necessary documents for 303 non-existing apartments! *Izvestia* turned the complaint over to the

Kharkov Regional Committee of the People's Control. Chairman of the People's Control Committee, Krupka, wrote to *Izvestia* that the charges were confirmed, and the matter was discussed by the Kharkov Regional Soviet Executive Committee. Y. Matushenko, chairman, and V. Baikov, vice-chairman of the City Soviet, were sharply reprimanded. The Regional Soviet received assurances that all 303 would be speedily provided with apartments.

Here is another letter. Economist V. Guselnikova writes of a serious deficit in accounting by the management of Construction Organization N.26 in Kursk. The cost of construction and volume of work were overstated. At *Izvestia's* request, the letter was checked by the Control and Investigation Department of the Ministry of Finance in the Russian Federation. It was found to be accurate. G. Tatarenko, head of the Construction Organization, was dismissed.

L. Loboguk wrote concerning the mistreatment of his mother in the village of Shipka, Moldavia. His mother broke her leg and had to go to the regional hospital for special X-rays. When she asked Dr. Grekov, the head doctor, for transportation by ambulance, he refused. She had to make the trip by automobile. The Deputy Minister of Health of Moldavia, V. Ven, informed *Izvestia* that for callousness to a patient Dr. Grekov was dismissed.

V. Moiseyeva wrote of mismanagement and disappearance of cement at construction sites in the Kirov region. The letter was sent to the district attorney's office in Kirov region. District Attorney Chernyayev informed *Izvestia* that cement had been stolen. Criminal charges were brought against those found to be involved. The heads of the construction organization were called to account.

N. Ovchinkova wrote that A. Smogulov had refused to pay alimony to his wife and child, had left town and was concealing his new residence and place of work. Thus far the local militia had come up with no results. The letter was sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. M. Gusev, assistant administrative manager, informed *Izvestia* in a while that the husband had been found. Money was being deducted from his wages to pay alimony.

To prevent him from doing anything like that in the future his passport is now stamped: "Obliged to pay alimony".

Nikolai Shtanko, head of the letter department and member of the Editorial Board of *Izvestia*, and Grigori Axelrod, his assistant, discussed another case with me when I spent a very informative afternoon examining the work of their department in June 1979. It reveals how persistently and thoroughly the complaints in the letters are dealt with. A chauffeur from Chelyabinsk wrote that he had sent letters to the management for two years complaining of unjust treatment by his director. "We had our doubts since such a delay is extremely unusual," Shtanko said. "However, investigation showed that the worker had not exaggerated. He was being harassed because of his criticism and given the hardest jobs. We sent a letter to the People's Control. They checked and reprimanded the director.

"We published the chauffeur's letter and sent a special correspondent to Chelyabinsk. We were afraid that he would be punished. Our fears were justified. The director, who had decided to take vengeance on him, had dismissed the worker." Shtanko paused. "And so our special correspondent and the representative of the People's Control all met with the Regional Soviet. The director was called into the meeting.

"After thorough investigation of everything that had happened the director was dismissed. The case, however, still not closed. Investigation has yet to be made into such questions as: Why was there such delay in acting on the worker's complaint? What kind of a director was he? Some time later we published a special article on this case in *Izvestia*."

The press in the Soviet Union is not only an organizer, agitator and propagandist. It works closely with the People's Control Committees. It is difficult to overestimate the educational and corrective value of their functions. Soviet citizens know that their complaints and practical proposals will be considered and measures will be taken.

In the U.S. the awesome gap between words and deeds, complaint and correction, has led to a widening chasm between government and the people. It is a major contributing factor to the "crisis of confidence".

I have heard a good deal of grumbling among Soviet citizens. However, with rare exceptions it never reflected loss of confidence in the government. This is because the Soviet people know they have in their hands the instruments not only for complaint but correction. This is one of the chief aims of the letter department of *Izvestia* and the press generally.

No society, even the most advanced, is free of abuses of power, bureaucracy, nepotism and careerism. Many socialist-minded people do not fully realize what it takes to build a new society and especially to transform people. Thus, they expect to see in the Soviet Union an ideal society free of all the ills they are familiar with in the capitalist world.

Our Moscow correspondents literally make a catalogue of abuses in Soviet society much of which they get from the Soviet press. However, to the best of my knowledge, none have ever written, as I have, of measures systematically taken to eliminate wrong-doing. I know of no correspondent of the big business press who has dealt with the letter department of the Soviet press or described the work of the People's Control. This vital aspect of Soviet life (and many others) simply does not exist for most Americans.

Readers' letters are hardly confined to citing complaints and requests for help. They play an important role in stimulating discussion on basic questions affecting government structure, and Soviet society as a whole. Thus, Yuri Feofanov, of *Izvestia's* Department of Construction, told me of a widespread discussion initiated by a reader (that was taking place in his newspaper) on the need for a new level in the structure of the Soviets. The letter which sparked the debate was written by a Deputy of the Tatar Autonomous Republic. He noted that in the large cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev residential districts have now reached the size of fairly large towns. The districts include not only large clusters of multi-storeyed apartment buildings but accompanying stores, polyclinics, schools, cinemas, cultural establishments. They are planned and constructed as one complex and have sprung up all over the USSR. The Deputy pointed out that a new level of city government was needed to bring the Soviets closer to

the grassroots—a Soviet of residential districts. His idea struck a sympathetic chord. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR has passed special legislation on this point. The proposal was taken up.

A similar nationwide discussion has been stimulated by a reader, Lidia Fokina, who wrote a lengthy letter (published as an article on conscience in *Izvestia*). In essence, she appealed for heightened consciousness on the part of all in respect to whatever work they were doing. Fokina stated: "It is our country, our society, our life, and it is we, by our conscious efforts who will make life better and better. We all have to answer to our conscience no matter what work we do." She particularly singled out the custom of tipping, a survival of the past, as a negative influence on taxi drivers. I must confess that Fokina's letter struck a sympathetic chord in me. I have long been disturbed by the negative effects of the widespread practice of tipping in the service sphere. Evidently, many Soviet people agreed with Fokina. A flood of letters applauding her came to *Izvestia*—many of them were published. Moreover, Fokina's letter was discussed in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.

Yuri Feofanov picked out another letter which sparked considerable discussion and stimulated action. It was a letter *Izvestia* received on April 10, 1976, from an irate mother in Orenburg. The mother complained of a serious shortage of nurseries in her city. She was particularly critical because the Regional Five-Year Plan did not make provision for an adequate number of new creches and nurseries to deal with the problem. Feofanov handed me a notebook containing hundreds of clippings from *Izvestia* which were in response to her letter. The letters were reviewed and discussed in the Council of Ministers and led to a substantial increase in the construction of creches and nurseries.

I told Feofanov that I was little surprised since one of the Soviet Union's most impressive and best known achievements has been its nurseries. In 1979 there were 125,000 creches and nurseries caring for almost 14,000,000 children. About 80 per cent of the cost of keeping a child is

borne by the state. I had visited many of these and what I found in them made me realize why Soviet children are regarded as the "only privileged class".

Feofanov nodded in agreement. "All that is true. However, you must realize we still have problems." He paused as he held up the book of letters. "The mother from Orenburg was quite right in bringing the matter to our attention. We must never, never become smug about our achievements."

I cited just these three examples. There are many more. Letters are regarded as one of the most important links between the Soviet Government and the people. Every letter coming to any newspaper, government department, plant or factory must be answered in ten days. The reply must state whether the particular body can help or direct it to some other branch of government or institution. Annually, *Izvestia* gets an average of 500,000 letters. All are acted upon. Naturally not all can be published. *Izvestia* publishes 3,500 letters a year—about 10 letters an issue.

I would now like to discuss letters of another kind. These are letters requiring legal advice or action. They are referred to the legal department which includes six lawyers. I looked over a number of letters and the replies. Some only needed legal counsel. Others, it was clear, involved investigation and possible court action. They were sent immediately to the district attorney's office.

The legal department of *Izvestia* seemed to combine the functions of legal counsel and public defender. It does it, of course, free of charge. In the U.S. this would entail a substantial lawyer's fee.

Once a month *Izvestia* presents to the Supreme Soviet a report summarizing the letters. These are regarded as extremely important indicators of what troubles the Soviet people. They are carefully studied and often serve as the basis for new legislation. For example, the Law on Marriage and the Family was prompted by such a study of letters.

Izvestia (and other newspapers) sends its correspondents regularly to other parts of the country to meet with readers.

Last year a tour of Siberia was made. A book summarizing the discussions and proposals was published.

Izvestia as well as all Soviet newspapers hold annual conferences of readers. At the end of each year they publish an evaluation of the work of the paper, present plans for improving their work and appeal to readers to send in their proposals.

CHAPTER XX

BLOWING OFF STEAM

I have singled out just one feature of the unique relationship between the Soviet press and its readers—*letters from readers*—because this demonstrates the essential difference in the media of the two countries. It goes to the very heart of the distinction between *working* and *talking* democracy. Working democracy places a premium on action. Talking democracy places a premium on words.

U.S. readers can and do denounce political leaders—from the President of the United States to the local representative. They complain about high taxes, unemployment, inflation, crime, corruption and many other social ills. They express their views on foreign and domestic policy, though in the main these reflect the interpretation of these questions presented daily by the newspapers, radio and T.V. Our press is filled with exposures and reports of studies revealing the deep-going *crisis* in all aspects of life in the U.S. No country in the world has so studied its ills with so little results.

The great divide in the U.S. today is between complaint and correction. The basic reason is that the crisis demands *deep-going* social changes which the powers-that-be will never accept. Since the U.S. press is very much part of big business, it is hardly in a position to serve as an instrument of change. It is, above all, a *defender of the status quo*. Few things are more frustrating to Americans than reading and listening to or watching the daily reports of calamities and crises.

Letters to the editors provide an outlet for that frustration. The outlet is a safety valve for blowing off potentially explosive steam. Not a single commercial newspaper in the U.S. considers that it is under any obligation to

follow through on the complaints of its readers and least of all to report to them as to what has been done to act on the grievances. Nor has any U.S. newspaper anything even faintly resembling the letter department I described in *Izvestia*. None held annual conferences of readers. Neither do U.S. editors dispatch staff members around the country to get grassroots reaction to their reporting. Nor are they obliged (least of all by law) to answer every letter and to help the reader if possible or direct him to the proper agency.

It is true that our press reports on individual cases of abuse suffered by people at the hands of welfare agencies, police, landlords and employers. However, its attitude has nothing in common with that of the Soviet press. Since circulation rather than disinterested help is the main motivation, sensationalism is the dominant characteristic in the treatment accorded by the U.S. press. As a pillar of a sick society, our media is hardly one to probe more than skin-deep or prescribe more than a band-aid.

Often, it is the U.S. press itself, which contributes to the very cases of suffering it describes. For example, no one is more responsible than our press for the distorted picture of welfare recipients as "chiselers" and "cheats". The "exposes" carried in the newspapers have misled many Americans to believe that "gouging" Black and Hispanic Americans are responsible for the back-breaking taxes. These inflammatory "disclosures" have served to arouse and nourish racist prejudices.

The contrast in reader-editor relationship in the U.S. and USSR is immediately apparent in the notice the editors of the *San Francisco Examiner* serve on their readers placed in a conspicuous spot in the Editor's mail box section. It announces: "We welcome letters from our readers, but only a selection can be used, and *none can be individually acknowledged or returned.*" (My emphasis, M.D.) There you have it! *Izvestia* receives 500,000 letters a year. It not only *acknowledges* each letter within ten days. It must assist the letter-writer. For that purpose alone, *Izvestia* provides a staff that is probably equal to the entire writing staff of the *Examiner*.

Readers are encouraged to write to *Izvestia* because they not only know they will be answered. They know from experience that complaints and proposals will be acted upon. That is why *Izvestia* receives half a million letters a year!

This is hardly the case with the readers of the *Examiner* or any of our commercial newspapers. Reader-editor relationship in the U.S. is essentially a *business* relationship. The *Examiner* is *selling* and the reader is *buying* a product—in this case a newspaper. The seller owes nothing to the buyer except consummating the normal market exchange. To make the packaging of the product more attractive to the consumer, a small space is set aside for selected reader comment. And that's it!

CHAPTER XXI

WHO BENEFITS BY REAGAN'S PROGRAM?

History has on more than one occasion set the stage for a comparison of the two social systems. But never has this comparison been as sharp as it is today.

In his first speech to the American people as President, Reagan dramatically held up a one-dollar bill for his multi-million T.V. audience to observe. Tearing it to one-third its size he exclaimed: "That's what your dollar is worth today!" He then tore off another piece reducing it to about one-fourth its original size. "And that's what it will be tomorrow," he warned unless the economic program he was soon to unveil would be adopted. Reagan's histrionics was aimed at scaring the American people into giving him what amounted to a blank check.

At a time the 26th CPSU Congress was discussing questions of peace and peaceful construction and of improving the Soviet people's wellbeing the Reagan Administration proceeded to implement its program, which in fact constituted a blitzkrieg against 50 years of social and economic gains in the U.S. Unlike the Soviet Peace Program, it spurs on the arms race and undermines detente. Here are some concrete facts and figures, so judge for yourself.

I have before me the "Guidelines for the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and for the Period Ending in 1990", i.e. the plan for the 11th Five-Year Plan period and the following five years. This plan was approved by the people after months of discussions and adopted by the Congress.

Take the share of the national income earmarked for consumption. That is money allotted for further wage increases, increasing the supply of consumer goods, im-

proving their quality, etc. By 1985 the share of the consumption fund is to be increased to almost four-fifths of the national income. Between 1981 and 1985 average real wages and salaries in the USSR will have risen by 13-16 per cent as compared with the 10th Five-Year Plan period. There will be a considerable increase in the social consumption funds, that is the money that goes into free medical services and free education (including higher education), into maintenance of cultural establishments, into medical treatment at sanatoriums, organizing working people's rest and recreation and many other things. This is guaranteed by the steady growth of these funds. To illustrate: between 1970 and 1980 they increased from 63.9 billion roubles to 116.5 billion.

One will find nothing of this sort in the budget proposed by the new U.S. Administration.

With Chrysler setting the example, and Ford and General Motors joining, big business has embarked upon an intensive wage slashing drive. All in the name of making U.S. monopolies "more competitive". Workers are being told: "It's either steep wage cuts or we close down the plants." Fear of joining the ranks of the unemployed (at this writing an officially admitted about 10 million) has compelled many workers to give into this pressure.

The Reagan "economic recovery program" calmly looks forward to 7.8 per cent unemployment in 1981 and 7.2 per cent in 1982. (It is almost 10 per cent as we go to press, *Ed.*) This, however, is only on paper. In reality, the Reagan Administration's blitzkrieg will throw at least another million workers on the streets, with Blacks and Hispanic Americans the most affected.

In the 10th Five-Year Plan period tens of millions in the Soviet Union were given new or improved housing. The 11th Five-Year Plan provides for the construction of new housing totalling 530-540 million sq meters of living space. Reagan's program provides for a drastic cut leading to elimination of the already modest subsidies for an extremely limited number of low-income families.

The 26th Congress devoted much attention to improving the health system. It planned the further extension of the network of medical institutions, improvement of their

structure and siting. Disease prevention work is to be stepped up and there is to be an 8- to 10-per-cent increase in the number of hospital beds.

And what about the Reagan Administration? Its offensive is directed against every program, every agency, every aspect of life that vitally affects the basic needs of the mass of the American people. According to the *Chicago Sun-Times* (February 18, 1981), Medicaid, a program of medical assistance for those unable to afford it, will be cut by one billion dollars.

This is only one fact illustrating the situation in the sphere of U.S. medical aid. There is every reason to expect that the Reagan Administration's cuts will cause medical costs to skyrocket and will accelerate the closing of hospitals.

One of the Reagan Administration's cruellest acts has been to plunge the economy knife into the Black Lung Program which the coal miners won after years of bitter and bloody battles. And this at a time when, according to a study by the U.S. Consumer Protection and Environmental Health Service, more than 100,000 miners are suffering from the dread disease, pneumoconiosis, known as black lung.

The U.S. once had one of the world's best passenger railroad systems. This is hardly the case today. Years of neglect brought our passenger trains to a sad state of affairs. However, in recent years, AMTRAK, the quasi-government-subsidized railroad, began to make some much needed improvements. The Reagan Administration's cut will not only undo all these improvements, it threatens to put an end to AMTRAK! The *Chicago Sun-Times* (March 11, 1981) states: "AMTRAK President Alan S. Boyd said Tuesday that President Reagan's budget would kill all passenger train service except in the Boston-Washington corridor and would force the layoffs of 20,000 employees."

Americans are alarmed at the rapid rise of fares everywhere. Rapid Transit fare in Chicago has been raised to 90 cents (16 times Moscow's five-kopek fare). To the list of inflation horrors one can add the one-dollar bus fare.

The problem of inflation remains as bad as ever. The Reagan Administration bases its entire economic blitzkrieg

on the demagogic pledge that it will solve the problem of inflation. Yet even by its own projected estimates inflation will continue to grow.

President Brezhnev, if he had chosen, could have been far more dramatic than President Reagan. He could have held up a one-rouble note before the delegates to the 26th Congress and the tens of millions of Soviet T.V. viewers. And he could have said: "You see this rouble note? It has the same purchasing power it had in the 10th Five-Year Plan (and before that) and it will have the same in the 11th. Because ours is a stable non-inflationary rouble."

The 11th Five-Year Plan ensures stability of state retail prices on basic food and non-food products.

Our big business press made much of certain shortages in meat and other consumer products in the Soviet Union. These problems, which are largely due to objective reasons, were frankly discussed in reports by Soviet leaders. But they were not only discussed, something is being done about resolving them. Thus, *consumer goods* will be produced at a higher rate than heavy industry goods. The former will be increased by 27-29 per cent while the latter will rise by 26-28 per cent. The production of foodstuffs will be increased by 23-26 per cent; *meat products* by 34 per cent. The output of recreational and household goods will rise by at least 40 per cent.

The Reagan Administration proclaimed its blitzkrieg in the name of fighting inflation. Yet, one of its first acts was to remove all remaining controls of the price of oil. This poured oil on the fires of inflation and incidentally added 11 billion dollars to the profits of the oil barons. As if this were not enough, the *Chicago Sun-Times* (March 7, 1981) reported that "The Reagan Administration will press for a quick end to federal controls on natural gas prices to make gas as valuable as oil", and it pointed out, "the move would cost consumers billions of dollars. Fifty-five per cent of U.S. homes are heated by natural gas".

I have already touched on problems of Blacks and Hispanics. The Reagan Administration's blitz is correctly regarded by them as an offensive targeted primarily against the non-White population, making their life even harder than it is already. No contrast is more stark than the life of

the many peoples and nationalities in the United States and the Soviet Union. Addressing the 26th Congress Brezhnev noted: "Ever since Soviet power was established, our economic and social policy has been framed in such a way as to bring the non-Russian regions of Russia up to the development level of the central regions as quickly as possible. This task has been successfully accomplished. Here, a key role was played by close cooperation among all the nations of the country and chiefly, by the disinterested assistance of the Russian people." And he added: "Comrades, there are no backward ethnic outskirts today."

Behind these words was the force of ten Five-Year Plans. The current, 11th Five-Year Plan, provides for the economic, cultural and social development of every of the 15 Republics to guarantee the equal development of all.

Or take the position of women. Ten Five-Year Plans have made full equality of women a reality that American women can truly envy. Under the 11th Five-Year Plan women's rights will be extended still further. The incomes of families with children will be increased, housing, particularly for young families, will be improved, the network of children's preschool institutions will be further enlarged so that every family will be able to use their services ensuring better conditions for the upbringing of children. Between 1981 and 1983 mothers will receive a partially paid leave for the care of a baby until it reaches the age of one. Subsequently this leave is to be extended to one and a half years.

While these steps were being planned in the Soviet Union, the Reagan Administration was moving in an entirely different direction in respect to women's rights. The most painful blows were struck against working women, especially Black and Hispanic mothers. When these groups protested against the cuts that would hit hard at their very lives, the Reagan Administration replied by characterizing them as "selfish". This elicited the following response from the well-known columnist, Ellen Goodman: "Who will be hurt by cuts in food stamps? Women with children... because they and their children are poor... Any woman selfish enough to want to take care of her own children had better find a husband who will never leave her and never get sick..."

Many more examples can be given to illustrate the different approach to vital issues taken by the American and Soviet governments.

As Leonid Brezhnev pointed out and as the 11th Five-Year Plan envisages, the spending on *environmental protection* is to be increased. The Reagan Administration and its big business backers not only refuse to acknowledge the *inevitability* of this expense in the age of the scientific and technological revolution, they have declared war against those who seek to impose such an expense on them. Even the limited gains made in environmental protection, such as the Clean Air and Clean Water acts are being undermined and agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Agency and the National Institute of Occupational Safety (NIOS) are being castrated and transformed into innocuous instruments. Big business will be "unshackled" to pollute the air Americans breathe and the water they drink, and to pillage our national resources.

The U.S., the richest country in the world, is at the same time one of the few major countries that do not regard adequate provision for the cultural needs of the people as a national responsibility, an obligation of the Government. Some of the agencies working in this sphere in the 1930s were abolished by Congress as an unnecessary frill. More recently, in 1965, with the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts, some financial assistance, extremely modest and inadequate, was given to the arts. Stating that for too long the NEA "promoted the notion that the federal government should be the financial patron of first resort," (*Chicago Sun-Times*, March 15, 1981) the Reagan Administration slashed the NEA budget in half, thus dealing it a devastating if not mortal blow.

The 11th Five-Year Plan (as have the 10 preceding ones) makes provisions for the development of the arts and culture. Visitors to the USSR can see for themselves the results of this policy—the vast network of theaters, Palaces of Culture and institutes which train cultural workers free of charge. The advances of Soviet art and culture are also graphically illustrated by the frequent concert tours abroad of Soviet theater companies and of professional and amateur song and dance groups.

Whereas the 26th CPSU Congress proposed that the budget of the Soviet public educational system should be increased and that something like 10 million specialists with a higher and secondary specialized education be trained, the Reagan Administration has something else in mind for the U.S. public education.

Our schools are in crisis. The Reagan remedy is to cut the already meager education budget and eliminate the modest support under Social Security to needy students. For hundreds of thousands of young people this will spell an end to college days. The student loan program will be drastically curtailed. Not only will it be much more difficult to get loans to pay for tuition and board which has skyrocketed to as high as 10,000 dollars a year, but those fortunate to get loans will have to pay an extremely high interest rate (at present 15 per cent) while at school. The Reagan Administration's cuts will result in the dismissal of thousands of teachers.

The very sweeping nature of the Reagan blitzkrieg is arousing a nationwide fightback. America's democratic forces are experienced in many forms of class struggle. A broad coalition of 157 national organizations, in which the trade unions and Black people's organizations are playing a leading role, has come into being. Its aim is to develop a national movement to save half a century of social gains. Once again, as they did in the 1930s, the coal miners are pointing the way.

The big business press sprang to the defense of the Reagan Administration's blitz. The *Wall Street Journal* (March 16, 1981) contemptuously dismissed the mass protests of the American people as a mere "yelp". As a "punishment" for these protests, it urged the Administration to double its cutbacks.

But what about the Democratic Party? What was its reaction to the cuts in the social programs?

It seems it is performing the role of "loyal opposition". Even the *Wall Street Journal* (March 26, 1981) found the surrender almost too much. It noted: "The big surprise in the great budget battle launched by President Reagan is that so far the Democrats aren't putting up much of a fight." It goes on to state: "The disinclination of many

Democrats to fight most of Reagan budget cuts confounds conventional expectations. For the President is proposing unprecedented cuts totaling \$48.6 billion", most in social programs the Democrats had introduced as legislation (in response to mass pressure, *M.D.*). But then, the *Wall Street Journal* itself explains the "mystery". It points out that "many Democrats see no way of saving endangered social programs" since "they generally agree with President Reagan that sharp increases in defense spending are necessary to counter the Soviet military buildup" (My emphasis, *M.D.*).

In order to frighten the American people into accepting the astronomical increases in military expenditures, the Reagan Administration and the Pentagon have resorted to the tactic of the infamous Big Lie. Without offering any reliable figures to substantiate their claims, they charge that Soviet military expenditures were and are far greater than those of the U.S. At first it was said the huge sums were aimed at "catching up". Now, Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, bluntly admits the goal is "military superiority over the Soviet Union". What is the source of the Reagan Administration's claims of superior Soviet military expenditures? It is the discredited CIA.

What talk can there be of any social programs when the U.S. has to match the growing military expenditures of the Soviet Union? Can the Pentagon be refused anything in this situation? According to the *Wall Street Journal* (March 5, 1981), "President Reagan is proposing to more than double the Pentagon's \$171 billion annual budget to \$368 billion by 1986..." (a total of \$1.6 trillion).

Three hundred and sixty-eight billion in one year! Never in the peacetime history of the U.S. has an administration turned over so much of the treasury to the military-industrial complex! This is really a nuclear arms race budget that not only menaces our "butter" but our very lives and indeed the peace of the world itself! This is the terrible price the American people are being asked to pay for the latest myth of the "Soviet menace".

The Reagan Administration began its term of office by slanderously and provocatively attacking the Soviet Union, making difficult the dialogue between the two countries.

But the Soviet leaders refused to be provoked or to respond in kind. They repeatedly expressed the hope that those who shaped United States policy would ultimately manage to see things in a more realistic light.

Addressing the 26th Congress, Leonid Brezhnev analyzed the relationship of military forces between the two powers and pointed out that approximate parity existed between the U.S. and the USSR. He put his finger on the real danger to peace: "A war danger does exist for the United States, as it does for all the other countries of the world. But the source of the danger is not the Soviet Union, nor any mythical Soviet superiority, it is the arms race and the tension that still prevails in the world." And he added: "We are prepared to combat this true and not imaginary danger hand in hand with the United States, with countries of Europe, with all countries in the world. To try and outstrip each other in arms race or to expect to win a nuclear war is dangerous madness." Brezhnev then proceeded to propose steps to ease tensions and defuse the war danger. He called for a U.S.-USSR summit meeting stating: "The USSR wants normal relations with the U.S. There is simply no other sensible way from the point of view of the interests of both nations and humanity as a whole." Brezhnev could have reminded President Reagan that on May 29, 1972 in Moscow, a U.S. President had affixed his signature to the historic Declaration of Principles which stated that in this nuclear age there is no alternative to basing the relations of nations with differing social systems on the principles of peaceful coexistence. As for SALT II, Brezhnev said the USSR was prepared to continue the relevant negotiations with the U.S. without delay, preserving all the positive elements that have so far been achieved in this field. He warned, however, against any U.S. effort to achieve a one-sided advantage.

The Soviet leader proposed concluding an international agreement on the Persian Gulf guaranteeing the interests of all countries and the security of maritime and other communications. He proposed that the zones of confidence-building measures (including the mutual announcement of and attendance at military manoeuvres) "be extended to include the entire European part of the USSR,

provided Western states, too, extend the confidence zone accordingly". The Soviet Union would also be prepared to hold negotiations on confidence-building measures in the Far East. Brezhnev proposed a moratorium on deployment in Europe of new medium-range nuclear missiles of the NATO countries and the Soviet Union, that is to freeze the existing quantitative and qualitative levels of these weapons, naturally, including the U.S. forward-based nuclear weapons in this region.

Leonid Brezhnev added a new and extremely significant proposal. Pointing out that the peoples must know the truth about the destructive consequences of a nuclear war upon humankind, he said: "*We suggest that a competent international committee should be set up which would demonstrate the vital necessity of preventing a nuclear catastrophe.*"

Indeed, it is particularly urgent that such a committee be immediately formed and that its findings are made known. A most dangerous campaign to *deceive the public into believing that limited nuclear war should be accepted* has been under way for some time. This is a monstrous hoax on two counts. In the first place, nuclear war cannot be *limited*. Then, too, the direct and indirect casualties would run into tens of millions.

Summing up the Soviet peace proposals Leonid Brezhnev urged the calling of a special session of the UN Security Council with the participation of the top leaders of its member-states to look for keys to improving the international situation and preventing war. *All these proposals which constitute a new peace offensive* (the first was projected at the 24th Congress of the CPSU between March 30 and April 9, 1971) were unanimously and enthusiastically approved by the delegates to the 26th Congress.

Has the Reagan Administration offered a single concrete proposal for peace? On the contrary, both its words and even more its actions did much to set back the cause of peace and to undermine the policy of detente that has been agreed upon by three previous U.S. Presidents at summit meetings. It is indeed painful for me, an American, to observe this undermining of detente. I was among the fortunate group of U.S. correspondents who witnessed the

signing of the Declaration of Principles in Moscow on May 29, 1972. Together with my colleagues, including the then dean of T.V. commentators, Walter Cronkite, I thrilled as the U.S. and Soviet national anthems resounded through the Kremlin halls. It heralded what most Americans and the world had hoped would usher in an era of reason and peaceful negotiation, and mark an end to the costly and dangerous cold war that had kept the world teetering on the brink of nuclear disaster.

As Moscow correspondent for the *Daily World*, I recall how amazed our hard-boiled reporters were that the Soviet Union did not call off the scheduled summit meeting, for President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had arrived at the very time that U.S. warships and planes had mined the harbors of Haiphong and Hanoi and had bombed Soviet merchant vessels killing Soviet seamen and inflicting great damage. But for the Soviet Government and people the stakes of world peace were too high to cancel the meeting.

The Soviet Union's desire for peace is as great today as it was then: there is no sensible alternative to the policy of peaceful coexistence of states with different social and economic systems.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN WORDS MATCH DEEDS

For an American who has never been to the Soviet Union but who would like to know something about life there the simplest way to start is to pick up a copy of the Constitution of the USSR and compare it with the Constitution of his own country.

The Soviet Constitution adopted on October 7, 1977, records stable, progressive Soviet reality, everything that socialism has achieved and that has become part of day-to-day life. This is revealed in all of its chapters and all its 174 articles. However, it is particularly demonstrated in Chapter 7 entitled "The Basic Rights, Freedoms, and Duties of Citizens of the USSR". Article 40 states: "Citizens of the USSR have the right to work (that is, to guaranteed employment and pay in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work...)." This right has been extended to include "the right to choose their trade or profession, type of job and work in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, training and education, with due account of the needs of society".

However, the right is not only stated. It is backed up by the entire social system (there has been no unemployment in the USSR since 1930), the socialist economic system, steady growth of the productive forces, free vocational and professional training, improvement of skills, training in new trades or professions and development of the systems of vocational guidance and job placement. The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, can hardly be compared to this section of the Soviet Constitution, though in substance they provide some safeguards of democratic rights. But only some. There is

nothing in the U.S. Constitution about guaranteeing U.S. workers the right to work.

In 1946 Congress passed a Full Employment Act but it contains nothing more than a pious hope. Similarly with the Humphrey-Hawkins Act passed in 1978 which accepts 4 per cent unemployment as the norm. It initiated no legislation to implement this goal. (Note that at present unemployment is more than double this "norm".)

Article 41 guarantees Soviet citizens "the right to rest and leisure". There is no such guarantee in the U.S. Constitution. The right to "rest and leisure" has been bitterly fought for in the U.S. as the long and often bloody struggle for the 8-hour day testifies. Though the 8-hour day has been established, exhausting intensification of labor—speed-up—is one of the sharpest issues in many industries. In the Soviet Union the right to rest and leisure is a right which extends far beyond just a shorter work week and a guaranteed annual vacation. The right is ensured by a "network of cultural, educational and health-building institutions," and by the "development on a mass scale" of sport and physical culture. One has but to spend a vacation at one of the palatial trade union sanatoriums or rest homes on the Black Sea, the former paradise of the aristocracy and rich under Czarism, to appreciate the difference between exercising the "right to rest and leisure" in the Soviet Union and in the U.S.

Article 42 guarantees Soviet citizens "the right to health protection". Soviet society implements that right by making all medical care free, by extension of the network of therapeutic and health-building institutions; by the development and improvement of safety and hygiene in industry; by carrying out broad prophylactic measures; by measures to improve the environment; by special care for the health of the rising generation, including prohibition of child labor.

We are four-fifths through the 20th century and the richest country in the world is still "discussing" National Health Insurance legislation. Even more than illness, Americans today fear the cost of sickness. As the *San Francisco Examiner* (October 24, 1979) notes, "Medical costs: Enough to make you sick". The average cost for a

patient in the hospital one day is \$200. About 22 million Americans have no health insurance.

Article 43 guarantees Soviet citizens the "right to maintenance in old age, in sickness, and in the event of complete or partial disability or loss of the breadwinner". Pensions in the Soviet Union are smaller than in the U.S. in money terms. However, the Soviet pension system differs from the American in that it covers all Soviet citizens, and the entire cost is born by the state. This means that the pension system is permanent and does not depend on obtaining economic circumstances. In the U.S. social security only came into existence as a federal law in 1935. It took massive, militant struggles during the Great Depression to establish that right. Social security has since been under constant attack by the reactionary forces, especially today when their assaults have become more menacing.

Here is what Ralph Nader's study group writes in their book *Old Age, the Last Segregation* (Bantam Publishers, 1971, p. 139): "Some 7 million older people, more than one-third of the over-65 population, are impoverished and must depend on someone else—their families or government—for assistance. The average social security payment to a couple retiring in 1950 met half the cost estimated by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as necessary for self-support; today it meets less than one-third. In urban areas it is even lower."

Soviet elderly are not only provided for materially (which improves with the steady advance of the economy). Their social horizon is not restricted to their rooms out of fear as in the U.S.

Article 44 guarantees Soviet citizens "the right to housing". This right is missing in our Constitution. Soviet society ensures this right "by the development and upkeep of state and socially-owned housing; by assistance for cooperative and individual house building; by fair distribution, under public control, of the housing that becomes available through fulfillment of the program of building well-appointed dwellings, and by low rents and low charges for utility services."

The average U.S. family pays for housing at least ten

times as much as the average Soviet family: from 30 to 40 per cent or even half of its income.

The Soviet Union constructed 110 million sq meters of living space in the past 15 years alone. The previous Constitution of the USSR did not include an article on the right to housing, because it is only now that Soviet society can guarantee every family a decent home. Soviet city planners told me that by 1990 or the year 2000, the USSR will fully solve the housing problem. No capitalist country in the world, including our own, can look forward to such a future.

Article 45 guarantees Soviet citizens the "right to education". It is ensured "by free provision of all forms of education, by the institution of universal, compulsory secondary education, and broad development of vocational, specialized secondary, and higher education... by the development of extramural, correspondence and evening courses; by the provision of state scholarships and grants and privileges for students; by the free issue of school textbooks; by the opportunity to attend a school where teaching is in the native language; and by the provision of facilities for self-education". Article 25 ensures that all this is made equally available in every part of this vast land by a "uniform system of public education". Never before has a country written into its highest law a guarantee of such a comprehensive system of education. Article 45 practically incorporates all the proposals long made by and long denied to U.S. educators, teachers' unions, parents, students and labor organizations.

The Soviet Union's educational "miracle" is well known. A land which under the Czars was 75 per cent illiterate, in 1980-1981 had more than 100,000,000 citizens (about one out of three) enrolled in some form of study. Atmosphere, opportunity and the facilities—all contribute to an ever-expanding educational system. The Soviet Union, of course, has its educational problems. I have discussed some of these in my book, *Why Johnny Can't Read and Ivan Can*. But unlike the U.S., the Soviet Union faces problems that are largely related to keeping pace with the rapid development of Soviet society.

The U.S. Constitution also ignores this right. The re-

spective federal agencies give educational institutions some general guidance and modest aid, having shifted most of the burden to the 50 states and thousands of municipalities and localities (the Reagan Administration plans to abolish the Department of Education). The result is not only educational fragmentation but an inequality which penalizes the children and youth of working parents and particularly Blacks, Hispanic Americans, Asians and native Americans. The U.S. faces a crisis in education as in practically every aspect of life.

Article 46 guarantees Soviet citizens the "right to enjoy cultural benefits". It ensures that right "by the development and fair distribution of cultural and educational institutions throughout the country; by developing television and radio broadcasting and the publishing of books, newspapers and periodicals, and by extending the free library service; and by expanding cultural exchanges with other countries". The implementation of this right is expressed in these staggering statistics: 573 theaters with permanent large companies and well-balanced repertoires spread over the 15 Republics and reaching into small towns as well as big cities; 52 theaters for young spectators; 100 puppet theaters; 150 philharmonic societies, 716 symphony orchestras, song and dance ensembles giving half a million concerts annually attended by nearly 250 million people; 39 film studios producing 300 full-length and 1,400 short films yearly; daily attendance of 11-12 million in the cinemas; 25 million amateur performers organized in amateur groups including ten million children; 84,000 book titles published in 89 languages of the Soviet Union and 56 foreign languages (one-fourth of the books in the world are published in the USSR); 123 television stations broadcasting in every language spoken in the Soviet Union; 350,000 libraries with a total of 4,200,000,000 books and periodicals; 1,323 museums; cultural relations with 120 countries; 1,500,000 copies of books by foreign authors are annually published in the Soviet Union and 130 plays by Western playwrights are staged.

The U.S. Constitution makes no mention of its citizens' right to enjoy cultural benefits. The business of culture like everything else in the U.S. is big business.

To this day, the U.S. is one of the few major countries which does not maintain national theater, music or art institutions. A country which has given world culture some of its finest names feeds its viewers and theater and movie goers the "cultural diet" of sex and violence. The economy axe has struck deeply into our museums and libraries. The Reagan Administration has drastically cut even the modest government contribution to the National Foundation for the Arts.

Article 35 guarantees women and men equal rights. Women have enjoyed such rights since the Great October Revolution. They are ensured by "equal access with men to education and vocational and professional training, equal opportunities in employment, remuneration, and promotion, and in social and political and cultural activity, and by special labor and health protection measures for women"; by "material and moral support for mothers and children". The well-known role women play in all aspects of Soviet life testifies to the implementation of these rights. (40 per cent of engineers, one-third of the Deputies to the Supreme Soviet, 50 per cent of local government members and most doctors are women.)

Perhaps nothing reflects more the limited character of democratic rights in the U.S. and of our Constitution than the fact that more than 200 years after the founding of our country, Congress is still considering a proposed Equal Rights Amendment. Since there is nothing in the Constitution on this vital issue, the amendment simply states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or by any state on account of sex."

Unlike Article 35 in the Soviet Constitution it does not spell out the guarantees which would ensure that right. Yet this simple request for an end to discrimination "on account of sex" has created a storm in the U.S. First proposed on March 22, 1972, it still faces an uphill battle, since powerful reactionary forces have thus far prevented its enactment. (And the Reagan Administration continues to block it.) It took 144 years for women in the U.S. to win the right to vote (August 26, 1920). In the Soviet Union this right was granted only a few months after the October Revolution and was written in the USSR Constitution of 1918.

Article 36 guarantees that "citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights". These rights were firmly established and expanded in all the Soviet Constitutions adopted in 1918, 1924, 1936, and 1977—as they have been in Soviet life. Article 70 defines the USSR as "an integral, federal, multi-national state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics".

Article 72 states (as have all the previous Constitutions) that "Each Union republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR". No multi-national state before or since has dared to establish that right in its Constitution. It should again be recalled that bourgeois Finland owes its independence to the October Revolution. Finland did not choose to be part of the socialist Republic established on the territory of the former Czarist Empire. Lenin fought hard against those who opposed the inclusion of the right to secession in the Constitution. Lenin was convinced that genuine equality not compulsion was the force that could create a united state. Six decades of Soviet life have demonstrated the profound truth of Lenin's policy. The equal rights of all nationalities are woven into the fabric of the Soviet Constitution. Chapter 9 spells them out for Union Republics, Chapter 10 for Autonomous Republics and Chapter 11 for autonomous regions and areas. Thus, a total of three chapters details guarantees of equal rights.

Article 77 provides that Union Republics "take part in decision-making in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Government of the USSR, and other bodies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". No bourgeois state, including the U.S., has the equivalent of a Soviet of Nationalities which gives equal representation to minority peoples, some of whom are a fraction of the size of the Russian people. The U.S. Senate is based on representation of two from each state regardless of its size. However, it can hardly be compared to the Soviet of Nationalities. Besides, neither the U.S. nor any other bourgeois democracy has anything even faintly comparable in national representation to that which exists in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the

highest body of state authority between Supreme Soviet sessions. Fifteen of the 38-member Presidium are Chairmen of the Supreme Soviet Presidiums of the Union Republics.

The Soviet Constitution does more than guarantee equal rights to its more than 100 peoples. It protects them from any possible infringement. Article 36 states bluntly: "Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law."

Those who boast of the "superiority" of bourgeois democracy make a virtue of the "freedom" in the U.S. to spew racist and nationalist poison and incite violence against minorities, particularly against Blacks and Hispanic Americans.

The U.S. Constitution does not possess anything even faintly resembling the concrete guarantees of racial and national equality contained in the Soviet Constitution. A prolonged and bitter struggle had to be waged for even the most elementary rights. Though important gains were registered during the 1960s as a result of the self-sacrificing struggles led by the Black people the battle is far from over. In Congress, in State legislatures, in schools and on the streets, an offensive led by the Reagan Administration is being waged by racists and other reactionary forces to turn the clock back.

Article 28 of the USSR Constitution states that Soviet foreign policy shall be aimed at "preventing wars of aggression, achieving universal and complete disarmament and consistently implementing the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems". For the first time in history a country has made the pursuit of peaceful coexistence the guiding principle of its foreign policy.

The U.S. Constitution has nothing comparable to this article. Our Constitution merely states which branch (the Congress) shall be vested with the power to declare war. It places foreign policy primarily in the hands of the President with the Senate having the power to "advise and consent". The undemocratic character of determining our foreign policy is well illustrated by the fact that it took only one-

third of the members of the Senate, the "millionaires' club", to bottle up SALT II which clearly enjoys the support of most Americans.

This example also gives some idea of what kind of elected representatives decide U.S. policies. U.S. Congressmen are indeed quite different from Deputies to the Soviets in the Soviet Union. Members of the "millionaires' club" are very little concerned with the needs of their electors and their contacts with them are only sporadic. This is not to mention the fact that they do not have to report to their constituents about their work between election campaigns. But in the Soviet Union Deputies regularly report to their electors (I've discussed this in Chapter VII).

Article 103 of the Soviet Constitution empowers Deputies to act on "matters relating to state, economic, and social and cultural development" and "organize implementation of the decisions of the Soviets, and exercise control over the work of state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations". I have already described how this control is exercised. The huge monopolies in the U.S. are largely laws unto themselves. The close down plants leaving tens of thousands of workers destitute (as U.S. Steel, Chrysler, General Motors and Ford have done recently). The U.S. Congress, legislatures and city councils are "powerless" in face of this exercising of the prerogatives of private enterprises.

Article 105 states that Soviet "Deputies have the right to approach any state or public body, enterprise, institution or organization on matters arising from their work as Deputies and to take part in considering the questions raised by them". Furthermore, the heads of these enterprises and public bodies "are obliged to receive them without delay and to consider their proposals within the time-limit established by law" (three days, *M.D.*).

Nowhere does the U.S. Constitution declare that Representatives and Senators are given "mandates" by their voters or that they are to act upon them. Indeed, as is well known, the gap between election promises and performance in office is the basic factor behind the existing crisis of confidence in all branches of government. Nor does our Constitution oblige our Representatives to meet

regularly and report to their constituents. The U.S. Constitution says nothing about the right of recall.

Americans well know how difficult it is to get Congress to enact legislation in the interests of the people. The U.S. Constitution leaves the all-important matter of procedures, guiding the introduction and consideration of legislation, to the House of Representatives and the Senate to determine. Article 1, section 5, point 2, simply states that "each House may determine the rules of its proceedings". Big business has used this opening to bottle up legislation it looks upon with disfavor and to promote bills in its interests.

The basic reason why such obstruction is impossible in the Soviets on all levels is the absence of antagonistic classes. Nevertheless, the Soviet Constitution provides for the widest involvement of the people in enacting legislation and in devising the most democratic procedure. Thus, Article 113 extends the right of legislation to virtually the entire people. It states: "The right to initiate legislation is also vested in public organizations through their All-Union bodies." And this right is widely exercised by these organizations. The trade unions, for example, were largely instrumental in drawing up and initiating the enactment of the Fundamentals of Labor Legislation. Teachers, educators, parents, students played a similar role in respect to the Fundamentals of Education law, and women's organizations had much to do with the Law on Marriage and the Family.

Article 114 also provides for referendums on important issues. Practically every major issue, from laws dealing with labor, environment, five-year plans to amendments to the Constitution, is preceded by months of intensive nationwide discussion. Referendum is a way of life in the Soviet political system. Article 108 states that laws may be enacted by the Supreme Soviet or referendum. Article 114 provides for a democratic and businesslike consideration of legislation. No committee in the Soviets on any level has the power to obstruct any bill. Bills submitted to the USSR Supreme Soviet "shall be debated by its Chambers at separate or joint sittings" and when necessary "be referred to one or more commissions for preliminary or additional

consideration". They become laws when passed in each Chamber by a simple "majority of the total number of Deputies". No two-thirds votes! No "Presidential Veto"! Article 115 provides for a procedure in the event of disagreement between the two Chambers. The issue "shall be referred for settlement to a conciliation commission formed on a parity basis". If agreement is again not reached, the matter shall be postponed for debate at the next session of the Supreme Soviet or submitted to a nationwide vote (referendum).

Chapter 15 outlines the powers and duties of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Article 108 declares this body to be "the highest body of state authority" of the USSR. It places in its hands "the adoption and amendment of the Constitution of the USSR" (Article 174 states that it can be amended by a two-thirds vote, the only case where this is required). The process of instituting necessary changes in law is not encumbered by the obstacles which in the U.S. have blocked for nine years an amendment that would prohibit discrimination on account of sex. Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides for an exhaustive process for amendments involving ratification by three-fourths of the state legislatures. Change in the status quo in the U.S. is made difficult indeed.

To exercise "the functions of the highest body of state authority of the USSR between sessions of the Supreme Soviet" (Article 119) the Supreme Soviet elects a Presidium, which is "accountable to it". Article 120 states that the Presidium "shall be elected from among the Deputies".

The Supreme Soviet also elects the Council of Ministers of the USSR which, as stated in Article 128, is the "highest executive and administrative body of state authority of the USSR". It has no powers of legislation. Chairmen of the Councils of Ministers of all the 15 Union Republics are ex officio members of the USSR Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers is accountable to the USSR Supreme Soviet and its Presidium.

Thus, the channels of government are all clearly defined: all roads come from and lead back to the Supreme Soviet. And all are collective bodies. The situation is quite different as regards the U.S. political system.

The historian Charles Beard not only defines government as "set apart" from the people. He points out that the U.S. Constitution is "not a set of clear-cut rules which inexorably control political authorities in discharge of duties". Beard notes that the Constitution provides for the well-known separation of powers which are divided among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. "Congress makes the laws, the courts interpret and the President executes them." Beard, however, states that complete separation is "impossible save in theory". He cites one of the most obvious examples in which the practice has been quite different from the theory. "Very explicitly the Constitution vests Congress with the power to declare war yet Presidents have dispatched troops in the Caribbean". They have more than "dispatched troops", they have waged an undeclared war for a decade against the heroic people of Vietnam. And as the Senate revelations have disclosed they have conducted secret wars (as in Laos and in the Bay of Pigs and planned and executed assassinations through the CIA, the "invisible government".) Indeed, so awesome have the powers of the presidency become, that the office has been justly characterized as the Imperial Presidency. Foreign policy, to a large extent, is made by "advisors" such as the unprincipled Kissinger, a Rockefeller protege, and Brzezinski, another "brain truster" of that dynasty, and a rabid anti-Soviet war hawk. Neither of them were elected to that position by the American people. Indeed, a host of presidential "advisors" (none of whom are elected) in security and strategic committees, in fact, if not in theory, make and carry out the major policy decisions. The "advisors" supersede the cabinet which the President appoints and Congress approves. The government, indeed, is more than ever set apart from the people and is more tightly in the hands of the real power, the monopolies. It is this reality, in such glaring contradiction with the principles of democracy and the U.S. Constitution, that is largely responsible for the "crisis of confidence".

The failures of aggressive U.S. foreign policy and the deepening crisis at home have led to a crisis in the Imperial Presidency. Avoiding an examination of the basic source, the decaying social system itself, U.S. political leaders and

analysts attribute the crisis to a weak President, Carter. Leadership, not the social system is made the issue.

Alarmed at the political disarray affecting the political process in the U.S., James Reston, dean of U.S. analysts, warns: "The presidential process in this country is clearly out of control: we don't have a four-year presidential governing term, but a year of on-the-job training, a couple of years at best of governing and a fourth year of campaigning for re-election" (*San Francisco Examiner*, October 28, 1979).

The Soviet Constitution is anything but vague. Powers, rights, duties are all clearly defined. Their implementation is spelled out.

Meanwhile, as Charles Beard points out, many of the provisions of the U.S. Constitution "are composed of words subject to more than one interpretation". Beard goes on to spell out the complexities of "interpreting" the highest law of the land. He notes that the Supreme Court interprets the Constitution and asks: "What Supreme Court? Judges die. Time changes. New Presidents are elected and nominate judges to fill vacancies. Sometimes new judges give opposite meanings to the Constitution... nothing is settled by saying the Constitution is a document as expounded by the Supreme Court..." Indeed, such is the power of the presidency in this respect, that the Supreme Court is often referred to as the court of a particular president. Nixon was retired from that office in disgrace. However, the Nixon Court (his appointees dominate the present Supreme Court) is still very much with us. It has given us the infamous Bakko decision which undermines the gains of an affirmative action of the stormy sixties and generally gives a reactionary trend to legal decisions.

The Supreme Court has the power to nullify laws passed by Congress or the state and city legislators. Indeed, the columnist, TRB, asks: "Is the Supreme Court a court or a super-legislature?" (*San Francisco Examiner*, March 7, 1980). Yet its members are appointed by the President subject to Congressional approval. Most U.S. judges, particularly those in high office, are appointees.

Article 152 of the Soviet Constitution provides that "all courts in the USSR shall be formed on the principle of the

electiveness of judges and people's assessors". (Very often they are women—M.D.) Even judges of military tribunals are elected. No Soviet court can "interpret" the Constitution or nullify the decisions of the people's Deputies. U.S. Judges, however, have the power (and frequently exercise it) to declare invalid laws passed by elected legislative bodies. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was compelled to wage a bitter struggle against the reactionary Supreme Court (appointed by his reactionary predecessors) in order to protect his New Deal. A similar check on progressive laws is kept by courts on a lower level. Thus, Circuit Court Judge H.M. Kaplan declared invalid the rent control law approved by Baltimore voters on November 6, 1979.

Though under pressure of public opinion the Supreme Court (and courts generally) on occasion render important progressive rulings (i.e. the Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation), the courts play a special role in protecting the status quo.

Few ruling classes in history have so hedged their bets to maintain tight control of the political as well as the economic and social system as has the ruling class of the U.S. The distribution of power among the executive, legislative and judicial branches, the system of checks and balances, the presidential veto, the special powers of the U.S. Senate, the "millionaires' club", the two party system and the power of the courts—all combine to form a formidable fortress for the maintenance of the status quo. It fears to even open the door to modifications within the confines of its own social system because in these turbulent times of profound disillusionment and discontent change can open up a Pandora's box.

A FEW WORDS IN CONCLUSION

By comparing the two models of democracy and two political systems I am not asserting that Soviet democracy and Soviet society have attained perfection. Not at all. And people in the Soviet Union are well aware of this. But the point I would like to make is that this is a society that is moving ahead along the road of progress.

Summing up more than six decades of progress in the face of unprecedented ordeals and reflecting the reality of an advanced socialist society, the new Soviet Constitution is the highest expression to date of genuine democracy.

I have contrasted the two political systems not to praise the Soviet and depreciate our own. On the contrary, it has been a source of pain that our way of life suffers by comparison. But, perhaps, painful realization that history is passing us by, is a necessary beginning. There was a time (our own Revolutionary War against foreign tyranny) when others learned from and were inspired by our Great Beginning. Perhaps, it's our turn now.

Not to copy, not to imitate the Soviet system, but to take from it the lessons that can be of value to us, as we, on the basis of our own history, our own experience and our own needs, *create our own working democracy.*

Майк Дэвидоу
ДЕМОКРАТИЯ НА ДЕЛЕ
И ДЕМОКРАТИЯ НА СЛОВАХ
на английском языке
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Mike Davidow
Working Versus Talking Democracy

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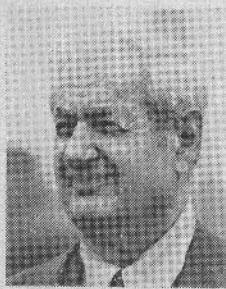
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WORKING VERSUS TALKING DEMO- CRACY

Mike Davidow is a well-known progressive U.S. writer and journalist. For almost six years, from 1969 to 1974, he lived in the USSR where he worked as a correspondent for *Daily World*. He travelled much in the country and knows the Soviet way of life firsthand.

The books in which he describes what he has seen in the USSR include *Cities Without Crisis*, *Why Johnny Can't Read* and *Ivan Can, People's Theater: From the Box Office to the Stage*, and *Moscow Diary*.

In this book he compares the social and political structure of the USSR and the U.S.A. and the typical features of the Soviet and U.S. way of life.



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